

Dr M: Beware of 'Greeks bearing gifts'
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad repeated today his plea to Malaysians not to vote for a change in government, alleging that US President Barack Obama also made promises four years ago with no results to show, and suggesting Pakatan Rakyat were "Greeks bearing gifts" seeking to win power.

The former prime minister said in a posting on his blog that Malaysians remained "much better off than most people in the world" and that while Barisan Nasional (BN) has held power for a long time, change was not always for the better.

"To be in power for 56 years is a long time. But look at the progress. No other developing country has made such progress," he said.

Dr Mahathir has emerged as one of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's strongest weapons in BN's bid to see off the rising threat of PR to its hold on power.

The former premier has helped galvanised conservative elements in Umno and BN behind Najib, and has been at the forefront of attacks against the opposition.

In his blog posting today, Dr Mahathir acknowledged that the crime rate has likely risen, as has cost of living.

But he cited examples of how many other countries in the world were in a worst shape.

"Financially and economically, we are not too badly off. The cost of living has gone up a little but people are not starving the way the Africans and some Asians are starving. A generous government is ever ready to extend help.

"Business is good even though we think it can be better. Our exports are high and still growing. Unemployment rate is low. Economic growth is still possible. At 4-5 per cent, it may not be as good as in Indonesia and the Philippines, but it is far better than Europe or America or the countries of West Asia and North Africa."

He also said it was obvious that Europe and the United States were not going to restore their financial and economic health soon.

"There will be people who would like us to ignore the fact that we are much better off than most people in the world. They would like to exploit every little misfortune that we may experience. They would even promise that they can bring about sudden prosperity, give free education, and all kinds of goodies. But observe the contradictions. They promise the oil-producing states to increase the royalty from 5 per cent to 20 per cent.

"They will do away with road tolls, increase subsidies on fuel and reduce rates and taxes. Their proposals will reduce government revenue and at the same time increase government expenditure. This is exactly what the Greek government did, and the whole country went bankrupt."

Dr Mahathir pointed out that while Obama promised "change" in the last US presidential campaign, "not a single change has been made."

"Change is not always for the better. Change can make things worse. Beware of Greeks bearing gifts. Beware of politicians who make promises."

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