

**Mahathir on Lee Kuan Yew's tough talk on Malaysia: He's just old**  
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**BY ELIZABETH ZACHARIAH**

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said his Singapore counterpart during his time in office, Lee Kuan Yew, should be excused for his remarks about Malaysia in his latest book due to old age.

"I excuse him. He's 90 years old so we give him allowance for age. Like how I expect people to give me allowance also. I'm also old. I'm 88 years old," he quipped after attending the Prime Minister's open house in Putrajaya today.

Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister said that Lee had no need to apologise for his scathing remarks about the country in his book "One Man's View Of The World", which was launched earlier this week.

"He's entitled to his own opinion. We live in a free world where there is free speech, especially in Singapore," he added.

However, Dr Mahathir didn't want to be drawn on a book on his immediate successor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi - "Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia".

He said, "I have not read the book yet. I will make references to it as we go along."

In the book, Abdullah said that if he had given in to the pressure from Dr Mahathir to continue with his pet mega-projects, Malaysia would be bankrupt by now.

In the book, edited by Bridget Welsh and James Chin, Abdullah also said that when he left office in 2009, he was determined not to be like Mahathir.

Abdullah explained that he also wanted Datuk Seri Najib Razak to establish himself as the prime minister.

"That is why I have remained silent all this time. I believe that once you retire, you are retired. You should not interfere with your successor. If there is anything you are unhappy with, you can always offer your views privately. Why bring it up in public and make life difficult for him?"

In Lee's book, the former Singapore prime minister was more scathing in his comments on Malaysian leadership. In a chapter in the 400-page volume, Lee said that unlike Singapore, Malaysia is prepared to lose homegrown talent to keep one race dominant.

This despite what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said in parliament here in 2011 that the government would set up a unit to entice back some 700,000 Malaysians working abroad.

Lee's own view is that the demographic changes in Malaysia will lead to a further entrenchment of Malay privileges and that this was more important to Malaysia than retaining talent.

He noted that in the last 10 years, since the enactment of the New Economic Policy, the

proportion of Malaysian Chinese and Indians of the total population has fallen dramatically.

Giving figures in his book, he said, "The Chinese made up 35.6 percent of the population in 1970. They were down to 24.6 percent at the last census in 2010. Over that same period, the Indian numbers fell from 10.8 percent to 7.3 percent."

On how Singapore had benefited, he added, "40 percent of our migrants are from Malaysia."  
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