

**Dr Mahathir Entitled To His Views, Say Two Umno VPs**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 19 (Bernama) -- Two Umno vice- presidents Tuesday commented on the criticism by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad of the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, saying the elder statesman was entitled to express his views.

Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein and Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi were responding to the views of Dr Mahathir in the former prime minister's blog 'Chedet' yesterday where he openly criticised the leadership of Najib and compared him to his predecessor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Hishammuddin said Dr Mahathir had the right to criticise Najib but that did not mean that others agreed with his views.

He said Najib's performance and style of leadership should be taken into consideration as well.

"For instance, when we look at what Najib did pertaining to the MH17 incident, I know that not many leaders out there could have done the same. If Najib had not taken the bold approach of contacting the separatists, it would not have been possible for me to stand here and talk of the return of the remains (to Malaysia)," he said.

Hishammuddin, who is the defence minister, spoke at a media conference today after a briefing for senior editors on the preparations to honour the victims of the MH17 tragedy.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, carrying 298 people, went down in Donetsk, eastern Ukraine, on July 17 when flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.

Najib took the bold initiative to talk to the separatists in Ukraine to enable the remains to be retrieved from the troubled region.

Hishammuddin said, however, he did not mean to belittle Dr Mahathir's comments.

In BANGI, Ahmad Zahid said any elected leader should be accorded respect by the people, including past leaders.

He said Dr Mahathir had the right to give his views, and Najib had the right to insist on the loyalty of the people as he had been given the mandate to administer the country.

He said every leader also had their own respective eras and the current era of the social media suited Najib's leadership.

Ahmad Zahid spoke at a media conference after officiating at a gathering of the Students Civil Defence Corps (Sispa) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

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