

Dr M open to debate Najib on 1MDB
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By Jennifer Gomez

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he was open to a debate with his chosen successor Datuk Seri Najib Razak over debt-laden 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

"I believe I still have the ability to debate. So yes, if he wants to," Dr Mahathir said to a question from Tamrin Ghafar at a meet the people session in Ipoh today to discuss the political situation in the country.

Dr Mahathir has in recent weeks voiced dissatisfaction over the controversial fund and has said Najib could not be forgiven for losing RM42 billion through the state investment vehicle.

Today, he said he has been studying 1MDB since 2009.

He said that since then, there had been unsatisfactory answers on why power plants were purchased at way above market rates and why money was being kept in Cayman Islands.

"We are asking where is the money, we don't know where it is, its the people's money," he said of the RM42 billion debt incurred by 1MDB.

He added that it was not his intention to bring anyone down but given Najib's handling of the matter, it was high time he stepped down.

Dr Mahathir also took issue with the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M), saying that he had advised Najib not to give the handout, but was in turn told by the prime minister that "cash is king".

"The thinking is that we will be better loved when we give money, but the Chinese are not impressed with this, the RM500 is hardly enough to buy their cigarettes.

"To me cash is not king, instead it is a bribe."

He added that when leaders gave out bribes like this, the lower ranks will follow suit.

He said that currently, Malaysia was ranked among the 10 most corrupt countries in the world.

"We are embarrassed but they are not, the pride of the country has fallen because of the current leadership."

Dr Mahathir again raised the issue of Najib's wealth, saying many questions were unanswered about where it came from to support his family's lavish lifestyle with talk

of rings and handbags worth millions of ringgit.

He said the people have been asking where these things suddenly came from.

"Where is this money from, before you did not have it, now you do," he said, adding that perhaps a certain person has been saving money to purchase these items since she was young.

He said then when he retired as prime minister, his salary was RM20,000, adding that the amount was more than enough for him to sustain his lifestyle.

"But when you see all these excesses, you just wonder where the money is from." – May 16, 2015.

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