

Dr Mahathir apologises for choice of successors
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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the country's longest serving prime minister for 22 years, today apologised for the choice of his successors, saying that he didn't know any better then.

"Manalah saya tahu waktu pilih, saya minta ampun, minta maaflah pada semua (How did I know when I made the choice, I am sorry and apologise to all)," he said.

The former prime minister said this in response to a question from the audience at a public lecture in Seri Iskandar, Perak, today.

He was asked if he had considered his successors' leadership potential before passing on the mantle.

The question was asked by Ibrahim Aziz, a former stock broker, at the public lecture on "Social evolution in Malaysia: what next?".

Explaining his answer, Dr Mahathir also took a dig at his immediate successor, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as well as current Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, without mentioning any names.

"We can only guess, when someone is known as 'Mr Clean', we choose lah, but once he entered the arena, he became dirty.

"So I tried to find a cleaner replacement, who knew, this new guy's idea (would be) 'cash is king' and if you give people money, they will like you."

In a veiled attack at Najib, Dr Mahathir said: "But in giving money to people, we must have money. If don't have, can do business, but not if we are holding a position (in government), but stealing, can."

His remarks drew laughter and applause from some 4,000 students, lecturers and the public.

Another audience member, Othman Razali, 62, asked Dr. Mahathir, who is Universiti Teknologi Petronas chancellor, to explain his thoughts on Najib's move to sack Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as deputy prime minister.

The representative from a senior citizens' group said he was also an Umno member and wondered if Muhyiddin's sacking followed a trend which Dr Mahathir had set, referring to his former deputies – Tun Musa Hitam, Tun Ghafar Baba and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Dr Mahathir, in differentiating himself from Najib, said Muhyiddin's sacking came at a time when there were many controversies, such as 1Malaysia Development Berhad's (1MDB) RM42 billion debts and RM2.6 billion in the prime minister's personal accounts.

"As the deputy, Muhyiddin had to ask but then... as the deputy you must be careful.

"But I think Umno members prefer if Muhyiddin remained as the deputy prime minister.

"What wrong has he done? Didn't steal money, don't have RM2.6 billion." – August 19, 2015.

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