

Dr Mahathir to set up core group to oust Najib
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By Jennifer Gomez

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he agreed with opposition parties PKR, Parti Amanah Negara and DAP on the need to remove Datuk Seri Najib Razak as prime minister and would set up a core group to achieve this objective.

The former prime minister, who quit Umno today in protest against Najib, said he had no plans to set up a new political party but would look at starting a group.

"It has not yet been formed; (I hope) a core group can show their commitment by signing a declaration.

"We agree on one thing, that is to get rid of Najib," referring to opposition parties.

He did not say, however, if opposition parties would be part of this group.

But he acknowledged that there were different people voicing the same opinion on Najib separately, and this could cause confusion.

"We need to have a core group with a single objective, so that if anybody wants to consult or support or object, they can do so through this group of people who will form the core of citizens who want Najib to be removed."

When asked if he would be leading this core group, Dr Mahathir said he would be one of its members but would not lead the group.

When asked if recently suspended Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin would follow him, he said, "I hope so."

Dr Mahathir announced that he would leave Umno today at a press conference in Putrajaya, saying that it was no longer the Umno he knew as the party was now dedicated to keeping Najib in power.

The retired statesman has been a staunch critic of Najib for more than a year now and even attended the Bersih 4 rally last August, which called for the prime minister's resignation over alleged financial scandals.

Dr Mahathir said some people might say he was disappointed that his own son (Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir) was not prime minister but denied that this was true.

If it were, he said, he would have promoted his son while he was still in power.

"But you know very well that he could only enter politics after I resigned. I don't practise nepotism," he said.

He also disagreed with critics who blamed him for current weaknesses in the country's institutions, such as undermining of the judiciary and concentrating power in the hands of the prime minister.

"I don't accept this accusation that I undermined the judiciary.

"In my time, the judiciary could even find Umno illegal, do you think at present Umno will ever be found illegal by the judiciary?

"I don't think so because in the first place the attorney-general will not allow the case to go to court."

Dr Mahathir has hit out at Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi Ali for not pressing charges against Najib despite investigations by anti-graft investigators.

He has also accused Najib of undermining democracy in the silencing of dissenting voices, whether the media, which reported critically on Najib's brainchild 1Malaysia Development Berhad, or individuals who lodged reports against the state-owned investment firm.

But critics had said Dr Mahathir himself had instituted such repressive measures during his rule.

The former prime minister said he had tried to find a reason to stay on in Umno but last week's suspension of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin made him realise that the party was "incorrigible".

"Only supporters of Najib will have a chance to be a candidate in the next election.

"I love this country, this is my country, but this man doesn't care for the country, he only cares for himself.

"It is because of his doing, I decided to leave," he said. – February 29, 2016.

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