

**Mahathir: I may be PM for short while if everyone agrees**  
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**The PPBM chairman says his main intention is for the opposition coalition to win GE14, adding that he has experience in winning elections.**

KUALALUMPUR: Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad says even if he becomes prime minister again, it will only be for a short while.

The chairman of PPBM, part of the Pakatan Harapan opposition coalition, told top businessmen and opinion leaders in Tokyo yesterday that there was a possibility he might be prime minister again if the opposition won the next general election.

According to a report in the Nikkei Asian Review (NAR), Dr Mahathir was asked if he would again be prime minister if his party won the election, to which he replied it was possible but that it would only be for “a short while”.

“If there is no candidate ... I might try, only on condition that everybody agrees,” the NAR quoted him as saying.

However, the man who was prime minister for 22 years from 1983 stressed that his primary intention was to lead the opposition to victory, as he had “a lot of experience in winning elections”.

On Prime Minister Najib Razak, he said: “The prime minister has become too powerful. I was powerful, but I didn’t abuse my powers. That is why I was re-elected five times.”

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the 23rd International Conference on the Future of Asia, organised by Nikkei Inc.

The man who pegged the ringgit against the US dollar in direct contravention of the International Monetary Fund’s advice during the Asian financial crisis between 1997 and 1999, but who was later praised for this daring move, told the conference that no single currency should be dominant, including the US dollar and the Chinese yuan.

“No single currency should be made the international currency,” Dr Mahathir said, regarding the yuan’s role in fostering financial stability.

The best thing, he said, would be to have a special international currency, such as a common trading currency, whose value was linked to gold, so that movement of value would be small.

“If China wants to make the renminbi [yuan] an international currency, it should be anchored to the value of gold,” he was quoted as saying.

Dr Mahathir described China’s Belt and Road Initiative, as “a good idea if you use the sea passage through the Straits of Melaka and the South China Sea.” However, he quickly added, it did not need to be protected.

He said: “We should not have military or naval ships protecting the trade route.”

Dr Mahathir expressed concern over China’s use of military power in disputed waters such as the South China Sea.

“Having military forces in the region creates a tension that is not good for international trade,” the NAR quoted him as saying.

Saying the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) would be “more equitable” without the US, he suggested that members of the pact invite China, the region’s largest economy, to join.

“Without America, countries can think of new ways to cooperate with each other in a more equitable way,” Dr Mahathir said, adding that “America [tends] to dictate and force its own views.”

Malaysia is one of three Asean nations in the TPP, which now has 11 members, after President Donald Trump withdrew the US from it.

The NAR reported Mahathir as saying the TPP agreement should be revised, adding: “To exclude China is to ignore the role that China plays in this region and ... to create an unequal kind of situation between China and the rest.”

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