

I Would Be PM For Two Years At Most: Mahathir

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By MT Webmaster

(ST) – Former Malaysian prime minister and now opposition leader Mahathir Mohamad says he will be prime minister for two years at most should Pakatan Harapan win the 14th general election.

“I can’t stay for very long. At the most, I can last for two years,” said Tun Dr Mahathir.

At 92, he would become the world’s oldest person to be voted in as prime minister if the opposition coalition wins the upcoming polls.

He told Japanese newspaper Mainichi Shimbun in an interview last month that he was still up for the fight against the ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN), even as he acknowledged it would be an uphill battle.

The general election is widely expected to be held in the first half of this year.

“I decided to eventually form a party, and this party needs to work with other opposition parties if it is going to contest against BN, and all the opposition parties felt that I should take the lead,” he told the newspaper.

Dr Mahathir has said he is likely to stand in the Langkawi or Kubang Pasu parliamentary ward, both in Kedah state, or in the Putrajaya seat.

Prime Minister Najib Razak’s BN holds a comfortable majority in Parliament but lost the popular vote for the first time at the last polls in May 2013.

However, the opposition has since fractured, with Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) going its own way and even cooperating with the ruling party Umno on Islamic issues.

Pakatan Harapan, an alliance of Parti Keadilan Rakyat, Dr Mahathir’s pro-Malay Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, the Chinese-centric Democratic Action Party and moderate

Islamic party Parti Amanah Negara, announced last month that Dr Mahathir is the opposition's candidate for prime minister if it wins federal power.

Dr Mahathir told Mainichi that if he becomes prime minister, he intends to eventually hand over the role to his former deputy and jailed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar, 70, is set to be released in June, but cannot run for political office for five years after his release, unless he is pardoned by the King. Dr Mahathir said that the opposition coalition will do its best to obtain a royal pardon.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the Najib administration's growing relationship with China, saying that Malaysia is no longer globally neutral. He accused the current Malaysian leader of being "too close to China".

Reflecting on his 22 years in power, Dr Mahathir said: "Malaysia's policy was neutral. We were friendly with every country. Whether China or Japan or (South) Korea or America... If they do something wrong, we feel we have the right to criticise them."

Dr Mahathir's criticism of Chinese investments in Malaysia is seen as part of a campaign to unseat Datuk Seri Najib.

Mr Najib, in a recent speech to business leaders and entrepreneurs, cautioned that there was a concentrated campaign to sabotage Malaysia's economy for political gain, reported the New Straits Times.

"We received RM63 billion (S\$21.4 billion) from China and Hong Kong, but Japan's RM70 billion investments don't seem to trigger anyone warning we are selling our country to the Japanese," Mr Najib said, an obvious dig at Dr Mahathir's own "Look East" policy in the 1980s.

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