

Mahathir calls Nazri a 'hatchet man'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday described Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz as a "hatchet man", saying momentum is being created to demonise and expel him from Umno.

"Nazri is what they call the hatchet man. I don't care at all for his opinion," he said.

He said the momentum is building up in the newspapers, with them publishing pictures of him with opposition leaders.

On the accusation by Nazri that he is now on the same platform as his detractors, Mahathir said the function attended by him on Saturday was organised by non-governmental organisations, not by him.

"Everyone was there. Many people shook hands with me and I smiled. If people come and shake hands with me, what can I do? I gave a talk organised by NGOs and PAS came. I did not organise the talk. I went there and they (PAS) were there ... so be it."

He also reminded Nazri that Umno does not belong to him.

"It belongs to all Malays and he has no right to say who should be in or out. Before he was born ... I was already in Umno."

Mahathir said if he is still popular among the rank and file, it will be difficult to remove him, but it would be easier if he is first demonised.

When told his comments had created disunity, he said he did not think so, adding many people had been asking him if anything can be done about what is happening in the country.

"Nobody wants to take the risk to talk ... if you take the risk, you will be punished."

He said among those people who are "feeling the pinch" are ministers and menteri besar who want to be in the good books.

"I have nothing to gain. I am retired and have no more ambition. But when people appeal to me and also because when I see wrong things being done, I feel it is my duty. Nobody wants to stick their neck out, so I did just like during Tunku's time."