

Wednesday: Dr M attacks PM

Yesterday: Dr M says he is being demonised

'It's not personal...'

By Wan Hamidi Hamid
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Again, it was vintage Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad all over.

Two days after suggesting that he made the wrong choice in picking Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to inherit his

mantle and railed against him for rolling back some of his policies, the former PM attempted to hit the pause button.

And from now on, Malaysians must get used to the ebb and flow of Dr Mahathir's missives against the Abdullah administration.

Some days, he will go for the jugular, like

he did on Wednesday when he launched the scathing attack on the PM, accusing him of back-stabbing him.

Some days he will use the lexicon of a victim, like he did yesterday, when he said that he was not being personal when he attacked Abdullah. Instead, he now accuses



FOR the next 10 days I believe there will be lots of stories in the papers trying to demonise me, make me appear bad...!

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'My queries not answered'

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the media of demonising him; and he accuses his former Cabinet colleagues of turning their backs on him.

He said he was disappointed that he did not receive answers to some questions he raised on the sale of MV Agusta, the National Automotive Policy and its impact on Proton and the decision to call off the bridge project.

(The Proton management and the Government have explained in detail the reasons for these decisions.)

Over the years, Dr Mahathir's most effective tactic has been to focus on his message, no matter what the distraction, no matter how faulty the premise. Over the years, his most pungent comments have come soaked in sarcasm. Yesterday was no different.

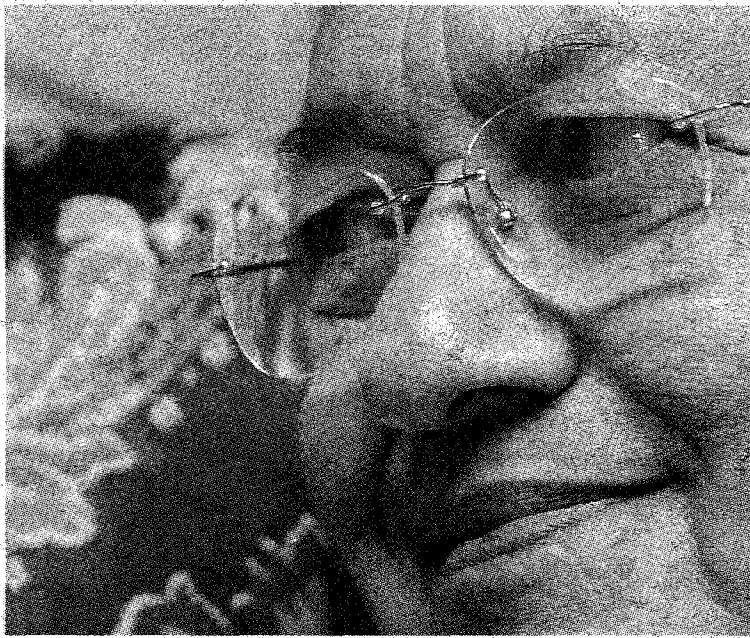
Dr Mahathir said he wanted an explanation on issues such as the removal of Tan Sri Tengku Mahaleel Tengku Ariff as the chief executive officer of Proton, the sale by Proton of its Italian subsidiary and high-powered motorcycle manufacturer MV Agusta for only one euro and thousands of Approved Permits (AP) issued to a few individuals for the import of luxury cars.

"I can't understand, I raised questions about Proton, about AP, Agusta but none of these had been explained."

He said if people were afraid to speak out against some of the Government's decisions, he had to highlight these issues himself.

"Instead (they say) Dr Mahathir can't speak like that, he doesn't have the right to speak, he is ex-prime minister, go and sleep," he told reporters after presenting his keynote address at the International Islamic Fair 2006 here yesterday.

Below are excerpts of his Press



Dr Mahathir wants explanations on issues raised.

conference:

Q: What is your comment on the Cabinet Ministers' reactions?

A: Instead of explaining about the subjects that I raised and complained about, all the talk is about whether I am right in making a criticism or not; whether I am following the Umno tradition and all that. But the questions that I raised received no answer. Maybe it is because they don't have an answer. These were my Cabinet Ministers you know. I thought they agreed with me. As I said, I always make mistakes in choosing people.

Q: Is it the Government's official view or just a perception that you used all the money on mega projects?

The PM didn't say it. The PM never said anything. But there are peo-

ple who said we couldn't continue anymore with mega projects because we have no more money.

Q: Do you view this as a clash with Pak Lah?

A: I'm not clashing with Pak Lah. I don't agree with some of the things done and I want to know why. Why can't we build the bridge? I want to know that.

Q: Do you have a problem with the Government?

A: I don't have any problems with the Government. I have problem with these things, the things done now. You shouldn't ask questions, you should keep your mouth shut.

Q: So how is this issue resolved?

A: Please explain. Why was MV Agusta sold for one euro? How did

it arrive at that price? I've already asked this. I've written the questions. But no answers. I want to know why Tengku Mahaleel was sacked, what was wrong with him? I want to know.

Q: Your view on Cabinet Ministers disagreeing with you?

A: The very decision that they agreed before now they have a new leader, they now disagree. If they disagreed before, they should have told me.

Q: On Pak Lah's comment that Dr Mahathir was entitled to his own views?

A: I'm happy. I'm very happy with all the comments. That he says it's my right to speak, yes, very good, thank you very much. Now I am speaking to you because he says I have a right to speak. But some others say I have no right to speak. Sorry.

Before the Press conference ended, Dr Mahathir told journalists that much of what they had written in their notebooks would not be published. "No need to write this. You cannot write this. Because Kalimullah (New Straits Times Press deputy chairman) will make a phone call. Yesterday Kalimullah already made the calls. He called *The Star*," he said.

(*The Star's* Group Editor-in-Chief Datuk Wong Sulong yesterday dismissed Dr Mahathir's statement, saying that he has "never received any advice or instructions from Kalimullah".

Wong said the last time he met Kalimullah was at a wedding reception two weeks ago where they chatted socially.

"The conversation was absolutely social in nature. I've not met or spoken to Datuk Kalimullah since then," he said.)

WHAT DR MAHATHIR SAID:

On Cabinet Ministers' reactions:

These were my Cabinet Ministers you know. I thought they agreed with me. As I said, I always make mistakes in choosing people.

On Tengku Razaleigh's worry that the issue may lead to split in Umno:

I think Tengku Razaleigh is competent to make such a remark because once upon a time he challenged me and when he lost he formed a new party, split the party (Umno). He knows about it. That's why he's advising me not to do that, because he knows. Just like Tun Musa also. Because he says it is not following tradition. He knows he is not following tradition because once before he also made the same mistake. Now he wants to warn me not to make his mistake.

On Tun Musa Hitam's comment that he must follow Umno's tradition in making criticisms:

... the new Tun says that I'm not following the tradition of Umno. He should know, of course, because he's the one who followed thoroughly the tradition of Umno, like resigning from the Government and then attacking me, and persuading Tengku Razaleigh to fight against me. Is that the tradition of Umno?

On Perlis Mentri Besar Datuk Shahidan Kassim offering himself to be the middleman to resolve the problem:

Shahidan can be a middle man somewhere else. Last time, he complained a lot. But now...