

# Excessive democracy is not good: Mahathir

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JUST because a practice is said to be democratic, does not necessarily mean it is good. Sometimes it may lead to anarchy, Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

For example, in some democratic countries, a government that is elected is brought down when the opposition organises strikes and demonstrations, leading to a new election.

The opposition is now the government in power, and the party that was previously in power is now the opposition, and organises its own demonstrations to bring down the government.

"The end result is that the country is totally unstable and therefore cannot attract investments. In the end, it is the people who will suffer," Dr Mahathir said at a press conference at the 54th Umno General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said while many Umno members and the public understand the basics of democracy, not many really understand how a country can be destabilised by democracy.

Asked what democratic rights are considered excessive in the Malaysian context, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has not suffered from excesses because the Government is guarded with democracy.

"Nevertheless I have to warn people against practising absolute freedom in a democracy. For instance where men can marry men and women can marry women, I think it will destroy our country," he added.

Asked about the need to restore the image of Umno among the public, Dr Mahathir acknowledged that people lose trust in Umno leaders who misused money and who are only after posts in the party.

Asked why the case of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who was expelled from Umno in September 1998, continued to be brought up in yesterday's proceedings, Dr Mahathir said:

"We thought the issue had gone away, but in the recent general election, the Anwar issue was used effectively by the opposition, especially the pictures of his black eye. We cannot ignore there was an impact in the way the opposition used the fate of Anwar."

He said some Umno members still find it difficult to believe, particularly the reason for his removal from Umno.

"They seem to think he was unjustly dealt with, and that Umno has not been just and fair. Because of that, some Umno members supported the opposition, causing a split in ranks.

"What we have to do is try to explain the truth so that they see sufficient evidence that it was not politics that caused him to be removed but his morals," he added.