

Mahathir: Tell me why I am a dictator
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad sarcastically asked visitors to his blog to provide proof that he is, as his detractors say, a cruel dictator.

“What is it that I have done which is similar in attribute or actions with that of a dictator?” Mahathir asks in a posting today.

Lamenting the label that he said was created by political enemies, the good doctor argued that such labels, with or without basis, would last a lifetime and were a useful tool to demonise rivals.

“Do whatever you want, the enemies of a person thus labelled will not stop from using that label.”

He likened this to the branding effect of designer goods.

In his political career, Mahathir said, he has been called many names by those who opposed him, among the most prevalent being ‘Mahazalim’ (Most cruel), ‘Firaun’ (pharaoh) and more commonly ‘Dictator’.

“When I am interviewed nowadays, even by someone who is not an enemy, their questions seem like they believe the labels, especially that of dictator applied to me as true.”

In his posting, Mahathir also gave recent and historical examples of people he alluded were real dictators, to underscore his previous arguments that his reign was not as bloody nor tyrannical as those who shared the label of “dictator”.

In particular he described the reign of Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak (right), a “dictator” said to have murdered thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members and amassed a personal fortune of over US\$70 billion and manipulated elections to favour himself.

“When I was in Cairo in Mubarak’s time for a meeting, when the president’s motorcade made its way from the palace to the meeting place, the roads along his route were emptied, with heavily-armed soldiers lining them.

‘Sharpshooters posted’

“Sharpshooters were posted atop surrounding buildings with orders to shoot any who are suspected of wanting to attack the presidential motorcade.”

He also described how Mubarak’s palace was hidden behind high walls and guarded by armed guards while the president’s political enemies were not allowed to get involved in politics and were frequently arrested, detained without trial and in many cases, they simply disappeared.

“There was no freedom of expression or a free press. No election for parliamentarians. Anyone can be appointed by Mubarak to be a minister. They can also be sacked at any time.”

In a similar vein, Mahathir also gave the examples of German dictator Adolf Hitler, who murdered and tortured six million Jews, as well as other documented dictators such as Benito Mussolini, Ferdinand Marcos, Rumanian president Nicolae Ceausescu, Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi and Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

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