

'Mahathir has dictatorial traits'
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Political researchers seem to agree that former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dictatorial traits, although they disagree on whether these traits have brought good or harm.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) lecturer Jeneri Amri said that Mahathir had acted in a dictatorial manner when he presided over the 1987 mass Internal Security Act arrests.

"Mahathir had also combined laws governing printing, publications and distribution through the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, so as to bar opposition publications when he was in power," he told Sinar Harian.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) lecturer Azmi Hassan said that Malaysia under Mahathir was under a guided dictatorship, as Mahathir was a "firm and principled" leader.

"This is needed in a country like Malaysia which is plural and affected by racial sensitivities. We also need this kind of leaders to ensure development is not stunted," he said.

Meanwhile, 79 percent of 353 respondents of the Malay language daily's online poll agree that Mahathir can be labelled as a dictator.

The fourth PM yesterday had asked his blog readers why people feel he is a dictator.