

Umno more democratic now? Dr M thinks not
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Former Umno president Dr Mahathir Mohamad had rubbished suggestions that current Umno president Najib Abdul Razak had made the party more democratic by increasing the voter base for the party leadership election.

In a post on his blog today, Mahathir said that the present election rules had in fact done the opposite.

"Actually the intention is to limit the number of entities involved in the election. The winners would be those getting the biggest number of divisions voting for (them).

"Effectively this means the real electors have been reduced from 2,000 to about 190 UMNO divisions. The number of members voting for a candidate is nullified.

"Far from making UMNO elections more democratic, Najib has actually restricted the right to vote from ordinary members to just the divisions. And Najib has a strangle-hold over most of the division heads.

"So much for more democracy in Umno," wrote Mahathir.

Recently, Foreign Minister Anifah Aman wrote a complaint to the *New York Times*, where he criticised Mahathir for cultivating "yes men" and introducing a quota system that allowed him to stay in power for 22 years.

One division, one vote

Anifah said that it was Najib that reformed Umno's constitution to do away with this system.

In May, Najib said that he too could have been the "longest serving prime minister" but he had sought to change the system.

The Umno constitution was changed in 2009 during an emergency delegates meeting which passed 41 amendments in just one hour.

Among others, the new system did away with the practice of requiring one to obtain nominations from 58 divisions (30 percent) in order to be eligible as a candidate

for Umno presidency.

The number of voters were also increased from about 2,500 to 146,500. This comprise of 500 voters from 191 Umno divisions and 51,000 voters from the party's three wings in 17,000 branches nationwide.

However, this is not a "one person, one vote" system and instead is an "electoral college" system where a candidate who polls the most votes from the divisional voters would secure one vote from the division.

Mahathir's son Mukhriz had complained about this system, as he secured more votes at the grassroots level than Hishammuddin Hussein for the Umno vice-presidency contest in 2013, but still lost.

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