

Dr M: Democracy won't produce good leaders if it's abused

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A democratic system cannot guarantee the people can elect a good leader, especially when the system is being abused, said former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The long-serving former prime minister said in a democratic country, sometimes the people would find a very good leader, but sometime very bad ones.

"Democracy, which was intended to give people good leadership, has become abused because people, or the voter, do not think what is good for the country but what is good for himself or herself.

"Your choice is no longer to choose the best leader, but about choosing the people you can make use of for your benefit," said the Umno veteran.

He said therefore a system originally designed to give the people power to choose a good leader has been abused and has become "a system which will make us choose a bad leader, as long as he can give us some benefit".

"That is why even in a democracy, we sometimes find good leaders, sometime bad leaders," he said during his speech at the Malaysia Trailblazers Association's official launch ceremony today.

Mahathir has been at the forefront of attacks against his successor Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, whom he has called to step down over the 1MDB scandal and the managing of the country.

'Don't just look at race'

The former prime minister said people should know how to choose their future leader to avoid getting the wrong person.

He said people would then be able to live in prosperity and peace once they have the right leader.

"If you start to choose people based on ethnicity or party ideology without looking at them properly, you are likely to choose the wrong leader.

"Once he becomes the leader, because of the power given to him, it is very difficult to change him.

"A democratic system provides you with the means to change a leader; all you have to do is vote, but unfortunately some people allowed themselves to be influenced with money or position," said Mahathir.

He also said ordinary people who have the power to choose must have some knowledge on how to differentiate between a good and bad leader.

'Act against the corrupt'

Mahathir also urged voters to act against leaders who are corrupt or had abused their power.

"If you have the power to change but don't have the guts to do it, then you will surrender to a wrong leader who may destroy the country," he said.

He also reminded the government to be transparent in whatever it does.

"If you have a lot of money in your account, I think we should let the people know (about it).

"If the money is meant for the party, then give it to the party, then it will be transparent," Mahathir added.

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