

## **Dr M laments 3R restriction, ropes in 'acid attack', 'assault'**

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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who complained about the current lack of freedom of speech, accused the police of not acting when the “people are splashed with acid or punched”.

Although he did not mention specific details, it is believed that he was referring to the case of national footballer Faisal Halim, who was splashed with acid at a shopping mall, and deaf e-hailing driver Ong Ing Keong, who was punched by a police escort of Johor Regent Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim outside a hotel.

In his latest blog post, which comes in the wake of Perikatan Nasional chairperson Muhyiddin Yassin being charged under the Sedition Act and ahead of the Merdeka celebrations, Mahathir said independence means “free of being controlled by others, free of pressure, and free of government oppression”.

Recounting the struggle against the British for freedom, the 99-year-old politician claimed that Malaysians still remain in shackles.

“The people are unable to express themselves or talk about ‘3R’ (race, religion or

royalty),” he said, adding that people were not detained when speaking about these issues in the pre-independence era.

“But now, all kinds of restrictions are imposed. Touch on 3R, the police will call and there will be charges brought despite 3R not undergoing the process to create legislation. The prime minister’s word is law. The approval of Parliament is not required,” he added.

### **‘Better during colonial era’**

Mahathir went on to highlight that during the British era, Malaysians were free to condemn the British government and the proposed Malayan Union.

“We could have public rallies and street demos without government approval, volunteer bodies which are NGOs, could be organised,” he said.

It’s worth noting that during Mahathir’s own stint as premier from 1981 to 2003 there were numerous curbs on press freedom and public gatherings, as well as perceived attacks on the independence of the judiciary.

These reached a peak during Ops Lalang in 1987 when over 100 people were detained without trial and newspapers like The Star were shut down.

Another wave of repression followed during the birth of the Reformasi in 1998 when his deputy Anwar Ibrahim was sacked, triggering massive street protests.

### **'Only the govt is independent'**

Mahathir went on to claim that in today's Malaysia, the prime minister's word is law and passing legislation through the Dewan Rakyat did not appear to be necessary, with the police and MACC playing along.

"Social media will also be blocked. So who enjoys freedom? The one who enjoys independence is the government.

"Baseless allegations can be made by the government and investigation can be done.

"Even innocent citizens can be forced to report income and expenses for decades," added Mahathir in a possible reference to the MACC probe against his sons Mirzan and Mokhzani.

"Pressure can be applied by the government for no reason so that the source of wealth is clear.

"Property can be seized to put pressure on its owner. Passports can be seized,"

said the ex-premier who lost his deposit when contesting in the last general election.

He claimed that the government, if it wished, could stop the trial of accused criminals.

“A small mistake leads to prison but a big mistake leads to little punishment and one may even be set free.

“The government has become the ‘Big Brother’ that will determine what we can and cannot do,” he added.

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