

Mahathir: Dictatorships can be good too
Malaysiakini.com
October 18, 2010

Dictatorships can be good for the people, said former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who himself has been accused of having an authoritarian brand of leadership.

Taking such accusations on the chin, Mahathir (*right*), who was addressing an international forum at the Putra World Trade Centre today, cheekily said: "Malaysia is said to be ruled by a dictator for 22 years. I enjoyed it."

"But at least we made some progress. This building was not even here (before my time)," he said.

Besides being accused of governing with an iron grip, Malaysia's longest serving prime minister was alleged to have played a part in channeling taxpayers' money to partly finance the construction of Umno-owned PWTC.

One prime example of how dictatorships or authoritarian governments can work better than a democratically elected one, is China, said Mahathir.

"There is no democracy in China but the system of the government it has can bring lots of benefit to its people," he said, adding that the change of leadership there is more peaceful than some democratic countries who change leaders in uprisings every few years.

In his speech, the veteran politician also lambasted his most severe critics from the developed nations, branding them hypocrites for trying to champion democracy.

Referring to the US-led war on Iraq, which was later justified as a means to spread democracy, Mahathir cuttingly said: "Maybe in the afterlife (the dead) can experience democracy but dead people won't enjoy it much."

I was right about Anwar

Answering a question posed by a delegate from an opposition party in Pakistan, the former PM that he would make the same decisions he made in his years in office, including the sacking of his deputy and now Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

"There were times I was wrong (but) in the case of Anwar I was right," he said to applause from the audience.

"If Anwar (*left*) is innocent then why has this new government charged him with the same thing? There are so many things you can charge him with, corruption etc."

He added that it is virtually impossible for him to be involved in any alleged conspiracy against Anwar as this would mean having to shut the mouths of hundreds who would have inadvertently leaked information.

"It's not easy. If there are more than two people involved, the third would tell someone else and there would be ample evidence of (my involvement)," he said.

Government should listen to new media

The statesman, who had also been accused of ordering severe media blackouts, added that media controls do not only come from the government but from owners, editors and journalists, who unlike the government, are not elected by the people.

For example, he said, media tycoon Rupert Murdoch (*right*), had dismissed a broadcast journalist after Mahathir complained to Murdoch of being wrongly accused of receiving RM60,000 in exchange for government contracts from a British company.

All the same, he said, the advances in technology is forcing the government to pay attention to media as a way to gauge public sentiments.

"Not all that the alternative media is saying is worthwhile but some are.

"The way to handle (new media) is to see if what they are saying must be adopted, and if it must be rejected, a good reason must be given," he said.

However, the government too has a duty to "expose" those who are controlling the media for vested interests, he said.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/145652>