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'Don't use Sedition Act to silence critics'

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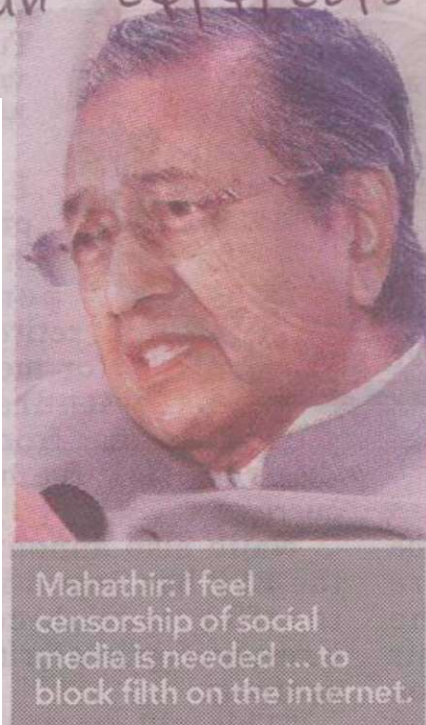
KUALA LUMPUR: The Sedition Act should not be used by the government to silence dissidents in order for it to remain in power.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (*pix*) said although the act is necessary for safeguarding national harmony, it should not be abused for the interest of any group.

"Unfortunately, there is a tendency to abuse the law. It is a good act if directed at sedition (offences)," he said during a question-and-answer session at the Malaysia Social Media Week at Berjaya Times Square here yesterday.

Mahathir said the government had made many arrests under the Sedition Act to silence critics when it should have been used only against those disrupting national harmony.

"But if you say the



government is not doing well and needs a change of leader, that is not seditious," he said, to loud applause from participants.

Earlier, Mahathir said there is a need to apply social media censorship in order to block inappropriate content from being disseminated to the public.

He said social media is akin to a knife, where it could be used to carve

beautiful works but could also turn into a deadly weapon if abused.

"I feel censorship of social media is needed... to block filth on the internet," he said.

"Today, using certain keywords can enable anyone to access any information, including developing a bomb to throw at Malaysian embassies," he added.

When asked who should regulate censorship on social media, he jokingly replied the prime minister, which drew laughter from the participants.

"Sorry. Slip of my tongue," he said.

"We need a very neutral person to do the censorship," Mahathir added.

Later when asked by reporters if he has any plan to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, Mahathir said: "No".

"It is up to him (Najib) whether he wants to listen to my comments or not," he said.