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Dr M: Country in shambles

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> Malaysia slowly changing from democratic country to police state, claims ex-PM

BY VATHANI PANIRCHELLVUM
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has almost gone from a democratic country to a police state.

Former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad wrote on his blog *chedet* yesterday that the country's image has changed with laws being misused to intimidate the people.

"The government blames anyone who criticises the prime minister as an attempt to overthrow the democratic government. The wrongdoings of the government and the prime minister cannot even be mentioned. Attempts are made to stop the people's gatherings by all means even by labelling it racist but the

government allows a racist demonstration to go on," he said

He also questioned the arrest of former Batu Kawan Umno vice-chairman Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (Sosma) on Sept 23.

"Anyone who challenges the (Umno) president is accused of sabotage, of threatening democracy and attempting to bring down a president that was elected democratically. The one who made a police report of missing government funds was arrested and investigated and driven to bankruptcy.

"When the court frees him, he is re-arrested under Sosma, a law that was supposed to be for terrorists. How can a person who lodge a police report about a crime be accused of being a terrorist?" he asked.

He alleged that all this was done to scare

the people, especially Umno members and its leaders who know that something is wrong.

Mahathir said although Umno President and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak has not been formally challenged, he has barred other Umno leaders and members from meeting him

Mahathir also spoke about the time when his deputies Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Tan Sri Musa Hitam, who in the late 1980s had tried to run for the Umno president's and deputy president's post to topple him

"Their intention was so that I will no longer be the president and prime minister. They wanted me to fall. But I did not stop them from campaigning among other Umno members. And other Umno members were not stopped from attending these campaigns," he said.

"They were not my enemies and there were no restrictions against their candidacy as this is the democratic way," he added.