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'Desperate Dr M forms alliance with those he jailed'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has become even more desperate in his bid to oust Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, even forming an alliance with those he had ordered to be put behind bars, said Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak.

He said Dr Mahathir's attempts had proven to be ineffective when only 700 people attended a gathering of opposition figures in Shah Alam on Sunday, many of whom were people Dr Mahathir had repressed for years, including DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang.

"Yesterday's rally marks yet another defeat for Dr Mahathir in his attempts to topple the prime minister. Only 700 people attended.

"And many of those present, such as Lim Kit Siang, had been demonised for decades by Dr Mahathir. Lim and his son were even jailed by Dr Mahathir."

Salleh said Dr Mahathir had no option left but to make partners of his life-long enemies, as he had failed to topple Najib through Umno and Parliament.

He said Dr Mahathir's smear campaign had damaged the good name of the country because he wanted his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Ma-

hathir, to become prime minister.

Salleh said the government would not let the freedom it had introduced be undermined by a man who sought power through his son.

The country, he said, had come a long way since Dr Mahathir's era of repression, when he had repeatedly used the Internal Security Act (ISA) to jail his opponents.

Salleh said the organiser of Sunday's gathering, Datuk Zaid Ibrahim, had written that Malaysia was under "authoritarian rule" during Dr Mahathir's time, during which the country experienced "the destruction of the rule of law and independence of the judiciary".

Anyone who knew Malaysian history would agree that Zaid's views on Dr Mahathir were relevant, he said.

"Even Dr Mahathir agrees. Yesterday (Sunday), he admitted that he was a dictator."

Salleh said the campaign to topple the prime minister could not be organised in the past, but it was Najib who had allowed such freedom to the people.

"It was Najib who repealed the ISA. Today, people are free to criticise, unlike during Dr Mahathir's time and he is (still) trying everything he can to take us back to an era of one-man rule."

In **George Town**, Penang Umno Youth chief Rafizal Abd Rahim said the presence of several Umno leaders at Sunday's gathering showed they had drifted away from the party's struggle.

"Their action, to appear with the opposition to pressure the country's leaders, shows they have drifted away from Umno's struggle.

"The participation of Tan Sri Mui-hiddin Yassin, Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal and Mukhriz is disappointing."

Rafizal said their participation showed they were trapped in the opposition's political play, who wanted to see Umno's downfall.