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DAP MP: Ex-PM cause of nation's ills

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the root cause of malaise in the country and his movement to topple Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will not succeed, if the people learned what had taken place during the elder politician's reign as prime minister.

DAP's member of parliament for Klang, Charles Santiago, said his colleagues might have found a dubious ally in Dr Mahathir, following his move to ally with the group.

"In his 22 years in power that was made possible by the use of draconian laws to jail dissidents and critics, Dr Mahathir introduced money politics in Umno, robbed the judiciary of its independence, clamped down on street protests and kept a heavy lid on media freedom," he said.

He added that Dr Mahathir was responsible for the jailing of his one-time prodigy and former deputy prime minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"No matter the controversy, Dr Mahathir was in the centre of it when he held the top job in Malaysia. Dismissing his autocratic ways does no justice to the scores of people and activists who were victims of his iron-fist rule," said Santiago yesterday.

He also questioned the motive behind the group's declaration, which he said could be "an act of revenge" against Najib for flatly refusing to further Dr Mahathir's policies.

"The onus is now on civil society

representatives and political parties to ensure Dr Mahathir does not hijack the movement," he said.

On the group's document, Santiago said it did not touch on matters that would directly alleviate the people's woes.

Santiago said several issues such as an independent elections commission, independent judiciary and free media were not clearly stipulated in the declaration, except for a one-liner stating that the "people are suffering".

"We saw opposition politicians, Bersih leaders and representatives of non-governmental organisations banding together with Dr Mahathir to go against



**Datuk Seri
Azmin Ali**

Najib.

PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali said he could not forget what Dr Mahathir had done to sack former opposition leader Anwar as deputy prime minister in 1998. However, the Selangor menteri besar described his involvement with the group as a "reconciliation".

"I cannot forget what had happened in 1998 but now is the time for us to move on. It is about saving the country.

"I am not from Umno. I served a senior Umno leader for 13 years and of course, I have a very close and personal relationship with Dr Mahathir for many years.

"I have said earlier in court that Dr Mahathir was the one who introduced me to Anwar to work for him. But it is not about a personal choice."