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'Ex-dictator giving democracy lessons'

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IRONIC: Opposition leaders were once jailed during Dr Mahathir's rule, says Rahman

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THE opposition has been mocked for "taking lessons in democracy" from a self-confessed former dictator Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Barisan Nasional strategic communications director Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan said it was also ironic to hear the former prime minister speak on democracy, despite his admission to being an autocratic ruler recently.

"Main opposition leaders such as (PKR de facto leader) Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, (DAP adviser) Lim Kit Siang and (DAP secretary-general) Lim Guan Eng were all jailed during Dr Mahathir's tenure as prime minister.

"Another one of his new allies is (former cabinet minister) Datuk Zaid Ibrahim, who had previously stated that Dr Mahathir's rule was



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad



Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan

'authoritarian' and that under him, democracy in Umno had 'died' as he destroyed the rule of law and independence of the Malaysian judiciary.

"And Zaid is now asking for a return to Dr Mahathir's rule," Rahman said yesterday.

However, Rahman said the independence of the judiciary and rule of law, fortunately, had since been restored by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He said laws that Dr Mahathir used extensively to repress opponents, such as the Internal Security Act, were abolished by Najib.

Rahman said Najib gave the peo-

ple the right to protest for the first time under the Peaceful Assembly Act and Malaysian democracy flourished in a way that it never did under Dr Mahathir.

Rahman added that people had continued ignoring the "sad and increasingly deranged rantings of a bitter old man".

"The fact is that Dr Mahathir is bitter because he has failed to remove a democratically-elected government, so that his son can become prime minister.

"He is angry that when it comes to democratic elections, he and his allies keep failing," Rahman said.