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'Najib rectifying Mahathir's policies'

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> Democracy now better than during term of former premier, says Rahman Dahlan

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PETALING JAYA: Oppressive laws used by former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to suppress those who went against him were abolished by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, said Barisan Nasional (BN) strategic communications director Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan.

"Laws like the Internal Security Act were abolished by Najib. The freedom to express one's objection was made part of the law for the first time, through the Peaceful Assembly Act.

"The country's democracy has returned to fertile ground in a way that was never felt under the administration of Mahathir," he said in a statement yesterday.

Abdul Rahman, who is also a minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said it was "staggering" to hear Mahathir talk about democracy.

He said Mahathir was upset over the

failure of his joint efforts with the Opposition in the elections, adding that the rakyat no longer cares about a former elder statesman.

The two recent by-elections and the Sarawak state election was proof of such, with BN securing a larger majority compared to the previous elections, Abdul Rahman said.

He also criticised opposition leaders for taking lessons on democracy from Mahathir, whom he claimed had himself confessed to be a dictator when he was prime minister.

"It's ironic that even the top opposition leaders like Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, who were all once imprisoned during Mahathir's era, are now taking democracy lessons from him.

"(Former law minister) Datuk Zaid Ibrahim, who once accused Mahathir of destroying the country's legal system and judicial independence, is now asking the latter to return to power," he said.