

# 'Malaysia has proven it is democratic'

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the election system practised by Malaysia has proven that the country upholds democracy.

"Many people will dispute what I say because they think Malaysia is not very democratic, but I would like to tell you that since independence, it has held 14 elections and there were not much complaints about the elections, except the last one.

"So in terms of the people selecting their leaders, Malaysia

has proven that it is democratic," he said in a talk at the Oxford Union in London, which was broadcast live by Astro Awani yesterday.

He said democracy should not be forced on people as they should make their own choices, and the act of forcing countries to become democratic was undemocratic.

"Now when I say this, I'm reminded of course that I myself was a prime minister who was accused of being a dictator. Of

course, many people believed I was a dictator. How else could you govern the country except by being a dictator?

"I would just like to point out that in the history of nations, there has not been a single dictator who stepped down while in power and allowed others to take over. Dictators don't usually resign or retire. They like to be dictators until they die."

He said he believed democracy could exist and help a country prosper only if the people under-

stood what democracy was all about.

"But we see attempts now to force democracy on all the countries in the world... they cannot tolerate other systems.

"They want to abolish other systems of government to the point where if you don't change and become a democracy, your country will be invaded to put a new leader."

On a separate matter, Dr Mahathir said Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Osman Sapian did not

trespass on Singapore territorial waters during his visit to a Malaysian vessel on Jan 9.

He said Osman visited the Malaysian surveillance vessel off Johor Baru Port without permission from the federal government, adding that he was surprised by the reaction on the matter.

"I mean the reaction to his (Osman) going there is quite severe as if he is going to war.

"He was in neutral waters."

**Bernama**