

Dr M backs polls reform, admits backlash after Bersih clampdown
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PUTRAJAYA, Aug 17 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has backed Putrajaya's decision to implement electoral reforms, admitting today the surprise measure was likely targeted to appease the "local backlash" against the Najib administration generated by its harsh clampdown of Bersih 2.0.

The former prime minister shook his head when asked if Datuk Seri Najib Razak had introduced the measure to repair his international image, insisting that the latter's purpose was more to soothe over rising discontent among the Malaysian public following the rally debacle.

"Not because of international backlash... it is his local backlash," Dr Mahathir (picture) told reporters after launching a fund-raising campaign for Somalia's famine victims at the Perdana Global Peace Foundation here.

The country's longest serving prime minister then said he was "very much in support" of Najib's announcement but was quick to repeat his previous opinion that Malaysia's election system is less flawed than that of other nations.

He however admitted to some "hanky-panky" in the system but did not elaborate and said it was minor.

"Yes, yes, I am very much in support (of polls reform). But I must stress this, it is not something rampant as u see in countries where 99 per cent of the votes go to one particular party.

"In Malaysia, every election u will find the opposition winning seats and even winning the different states.

"So there may be some hanky-panky but generally, the elections in Malaysia are clean. Not absolutely clean, but clean," said Dr Mahathir, who remains influential in Umno and the government.

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