

**Danger in too much freedom**  
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**By NANCY NAIS**

*NOT ALL ARE GOOD: Dr M cautions against Western ideology*

PUTRAJAYA: TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad has voiced his doubts on the need for freedom of assembly in the country.

"I believe it is not going to work.

"The opposition has already made up its mind in winning the next general election.

"They are very frustrated because since independence, there has only been one party elected to govern this country for over 55 years."

The former prime minister said the opposition would do anything to win. One of them was by accusing the government of not conforming to liberal ideas regarding democracy. They also claimed that the people were not given full freedom.

"The government's response, of course, is to try and accommodate them. But we must examine the situation carefully."

Blaming the idea of freedom of assembly on Western countries, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was fortunate that throughout the years, the country had been relatively stable and thus, able to grow much faster than other developing countries.

He said Malaysia should not rely heavily on Western ideology but instead, come up with its own system.

Voicing his doubts over the acceptance of foreign ideology, Dr Mahathir said: "I not only think but also look and study things carefully. When I travel, I look at things carefully and make comparisons of what I see. I don't accept things at face value. You cannot trust what you hear or see. Don't jump into conclusion without thinking.

"I admit I am always suspicious of any ideas that come out of the West.

"They come up with ideas of freedom. "While many of them are good, there are those that are destructive."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would lose its independence if the leaders were easily influenced and weak.

He said he believed that too much freedom could also result in ethnic tension.

"Now that we want to be liberal, what has happened is that now we have become more race-conscious than before.

"Today, people are accusing each other of being racist. There is more antagonism between the races than before when there was no liberalism," he said at a seminar on freedom of assembly organised by the Attorney-General's Chambers yesterday.

"Apart from being firm, the government must be fair.

"Do you think Malaysia is an autocratic country? Yes, we are not liberal but still a democratic country in the sense that we can change a government through democratic means, that is by voting.

"The fact that opposition members have always been elected and are running a few states prove that elections in Malaysia are clean.

Earlier, he launched the Maybank Foundation-Perdana Leadership Foundation Essay Competition 2012.

Perdana Leadership executive director Tan Sri Nik Mohamed Nik Yaacob said young Malaysians aged 13 to 25 were invited to write essays and blog on their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

He said the organisers wanted to hear views from young people on how Malaysians could ensure a prosperous and brighter future for the nation.

The biennial competition is open to teenagers aged 13 to 17 for category A and youth aged 18 to 25 for category B, with the theme, "Shaping the Nation: Our Rights and Responsibilities as Malaysian Citizens".

Participants can write either in the format of an essay or blog in Bahasa Melayu or English, but preferably in English. For more information, go to <http://perdanaessaycompetition.com.my>, call 03-8885 8900 or email to [essay2012@perdana.org.my](mailto:essay2012@perdana.org.my)

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