

Dr M: Prove I was a dictator
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By Hafidz Baharom

KUALA LUMPUR, July 18 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad challenged his detractors today to show how he had been a “dictator” during his 22 years as prime minister, as he continued to defend his legacy following a recent spat with Lim Kit Siang over the alleged revival of Mahathirism.

“I wish to know from the visitors of my blog, what [I did] during my tenure as prime minister that proves I am a dictator,” he said in his latest posting on his blog, chedet.co.cc.

Dr Mahathir noted other leaders labelled as such included Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Ferdinand Marcos and Nicolae Ceausescu.

“I was given many nicknames when I was prime minister. ‘Mahazalim’, ‘Pharaoh,’ and ‘Dictator’ were among the few used by my political enemies,” he wrote.

The former prime minister had recently been embroiled in a verbal spat with the DAP’s Lim over suggestions that his brand of politics still dominated the current Barisan Nasional (BN) administration.

Last week, he said the idea of “Mahathirism” was a figment of Lim’s imagination, pointing out that his DAP rival’s campaign against the revival of the ex-premier’s brand of politics was an exercise in futility.

Earlier, the DAP veteran had denied harbouring hatred for long-time political rival Dr Mahathir, suggesting instead that he only disliked the influential leader’s brand of politics.

Writing in his blog today, Dr Mahathir defended his administration against long-standing criticisms that it had been a dictatorship.

He cited the recent overthrow of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and appeared to suggest his administration compared favourably to that of the deposed Middle Eastern leader.

“When I was in Cairo during Mubarak’s time for a meeting, whenever his motorcade moved from the palace to the meeting venue, the roads would be emptied and armed soldiers would line up (along) the streets. The roofs of buildings would have sharp-shooter soldiers armed and ready to shoot whoever was suspected trying to attack the Presidential Motorcade.

“The Presidential Palace was closed off with high walls and armed soldiers all the time. His enemies were not allowed to [enter politics], were constantly placed under arrest, locked up for no reason and some even disappeared. For over 30 years as president, he (Mubarak) was never challenged by anyone, and even received 99 percent of the votes during elections,” he added.

Dr Mahathir then reiterated his request for evidence to show how his premiership had been dictatorial in nature.

Despite retiring in 2003, Dr Mahathir continues to loom large over the Malaysian political landscape and has been seen as BN's lead campaigner of late, ahead of polls that must be called soon.

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