

M'sians reminded Mahathir the villain, not hero
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The people seem to have short memories of the former Prime Minister's 22-year-old repressive rule during which he created much of the mess the country is in.

KUALA LUMPUR: Universiti Malaya law professor Azmi Shahrom lamented at a Public Forum, Malaysian Freedom Summit, in Petaling Jaya on Sunday, that former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has suddenly emerged as a hero of sorts in the public eye after putting in just two brief appearances at the recent Bersih 4 rallies in Kuala Lumpur on the eve of Merdeka, "The people seem to have short memories on the repressive Mahathir regime from 1981 to 2003."

"Mahathir is the man responsible for much of the mess that the country is in today."

He asked: "Who destroyed our Judiciary, frightened the mass media and destroyed the democratic institutions of state?"

"Everything comes down to Mahathir. However, he has suddenly become a hero because many people prevailed on him to help get rid of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak who was in fact installed by him. I don't know what to say."

It's not justified that he suddenly becomes a hero overnight just because he attended two Bersih 4 rallies briefly, added Shahrom.

The law professor also advised the gathering not to be distracted by the Red Shirts playing the race card, under the guise of Malay dignity, to cover up wrongdoing and sweep them under the carpet. "We need to expose them."

"Whatever they do, calling the Chinese pigs or making false claims, civil society will address them without stooping to their level and will move forward."

He noted that according to a survey conducted by Merdeka Center, only 24 per cent of the Malays supported the Red Shirts, a figure even less than Umno's hardcore 30 per cent support during General Elections when the majority of the 40 per cent Malay fence sitters traditionally leaned towards the party.

Bersih 2.0 Chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah, whose husband the late Yunus Ali was among those detained in 1987 by Mahathir under the draconian Internal Security Act (ISA), agreed with Azmi during the Forum that "it's not justified that Mahathir becomes a hero overnight just because he attended Bersih 4".

She conceded thanking Mahathir for turning up at Bersih 4 to "show his solidarity with the people, not Bersih 2.0" but reiterated that his legacy of centralization of power and the culture of fear, in the wake of Ops Lallang in 1987, cannot be forgotten".

Chin could not explain how Mahathir the villain appeared to have since emerged as a hero in the eyes of the people. She did not say whether it was due to the people forgetting easily or because they were more desperate to get rid of Najib by whatever

means rather than dwell on Mahathir's repressive past and his role in creating the situation the country faces today.

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