

**Dr M: I was a dictator**  
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**BY KAMLES KUMAR**

**Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad during the Kongress Rakyat 2016 forum organised by the Save Malaysia movement in Shah Alam March 27, 2016. — Picture by Yusof Mat Isa**

SHAH ALAM, March 27 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad admitted today that he was a “dictator” during his tenure as the country’s longest-serving prime minister.

He claimed, however, that people did not rally against him unlike the Save Malaysia movement headed by him that calls for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s resignation.

“I also was a dictator before. But that is all right, people did not demonstrate against me before,” Dr Mahathir told a press conference here after the Kongres Rakyat 2016 forum organised by the Save Malaysia movement.

Thousands of Malaysians, however, did hold mass protests during the 1998 “Reformasi” wave, calling for Dr Mahathir’s resignation after the prime minister sacked his then-deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on allegations of corruption and sodomy.

Dr Mahathir said today that the Save Malaysia movement aims to get a million signatures by the end of the year to pressure the rulers to take a stand on the political situation in the country.

“We must show the rulers that we want Najib to be out. This declaration should be signed by all including NGO, parties and the worker unions.

“People said I should bring a lorry. I only know how to bring a motorcar, but if need be, I will drive a lorry to the Palace. We want to show the rulers how the people are unhappy with Najib,” Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir, who was prime minister for 22 years from 1981 to 2003, said he had supported making Najib prime minister because he regarded Najib’s father, Tun Abdul Razak, a hero.

He also maintained that he has always had a good relationship with the Palace despite introducing legislation in 1992 to curb the power of the rulers.

“That is their view, and they can have their view. For as long as I know, I got along fine with all the Sultans despite the legislation that I had introduced.

“You know, one of my best friends was the late Sultan of Johor and you know I changed the law with regards to assault by any Sultan on anybody, but he was my friend until the last,” said Dr Mahathir.

He was responding to Johor crown prince Tunku Ismail Ibrahim's statement Wednesday that the relationship between the government and the Johor royal family is currently good, now that the 1992 constitutional crisis is behind them.

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