

Malaysia's election system proves it's a democratic country - Dr Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the election system practised by Malaysia has proven that the country upholds democracy.

"Many people would dispute what I say because they think that Malaysia is not very democratic but I would like to tell you that since independence, it has held 14 elections and there was not much complains about the elections except the last one.

"So in terms of the people selecting their leaders, Malaysia has proven that it is democratic," he said when delivering the Oxford Union talk that was broadcast live by Astro Awani from London early today.

Dr Mahathir in his talk said democrats now have become intolerant of other countries' systems which they consider as dictatorships.

He said that democracy should not be forced on people as they should be making their own choices, and the act of forcing countries to become democratic is undemocratic.

"Now when I say this, I'm reminded of course that I myself was a prime minister who was accused of being a dictator. Of course, many people believed I was a dictator, how else could you govern the country except by being a dictator

"I just would like to point that in the history of nations, there has not been a single dictator who stepped down while in power and allow others to take over. Dictators don't usually resign or retire, they like to be dictators until they die," he said.

The prime minister said that although democracy can be manipulated in many ways as it was very difficult and complex to work with, it was good in the sense that democracy allowed people to choose their own government.

Hence, Dr Mahathir said he believed that democracy could only exist and help a country to prosper if the people understood what democracy was all about.

“But we see attempts now to force democracy on all the countries in the world. Democrats have now become intolerant of other systems. They want to abolish other systems of government to the point where if you don’t change and become a democracy, your country will be invaded in order to put in a new leader.

Looking back at his 22-year tenure as the fourth prime minister, Dr Mahathir also shared that he was accused of cronyism when he helped the private sector.

He said his government had worked very well with the private sector as a way to help enrich people to help create wealth for the government.

"Governments are good at collecting taxes but if the people are poor who are they going to tax. We must enrich the people first and make their businesses profitable, only then they would have to pay corporate tax and income tax. This is where the government gets money.

Dr Mahathir led the opposition coalition to victory in the last Malaysian general election in May 2018. The victory ended the Barisan Nasional rule of the country since independence in 1957.

At the age of 93, Dr Mahathir is the oldest elected leader in the world.

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