

Warning against pressure groups

PM: Defend Constitution

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JOHORE BARU, Thurs.
— The Prime Minister today called on the *rakyat* to defend the existing Constitution and the democratic process for the sake of their own well-being and to avoid tension and upheaval.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they should not allow certain groups to drown "the voice of the majority".

"The Barisan Nasional is ruling the country by a vote of the majority," he said in reference to attempts by a small group to press for a review of the Constitution.

He questioned the right of the minority group of "only 200 to 300 people" to continue to pressure the Government on the matter even though most of them might have had legal training.

"If they have the right (to propose revising the Constitution), others too have the right to express different views. Perhaps Pas will say: 'There should not be

a Constitution, use the Quran as a guide'.

"Another group may propose that the *Hukum Syarak* (Islamic laws) be imposed on other communities as well, while others may claim the division of electoral seats is unfair because of the priority given to the rural areas."

Dr Mahathir warned of the dangers of bowing to pressure from a small group which wanted a review of the Constitution to suit its wishes.

Policies

He said that if the Government did so there would be tension and chaos as it would mean disregarding the decision of the majority which wanted the Constitution to remain as it was.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the opening of a community hall at Kampung Pok in Gelang Patah, 60km from here, after touring various areas in the West Johore agricultural area.

"By a majority decision of the vote, the Barisan Nasional is in charge, but there are some groups which are not satisfied

with this and the majority support for the party.

"Our democracy allows the *rakyat* to have their voices heard. The party which is voted in by the majority forms the Government, draws up the policies and looks after finance."

The Prime Minister said there were many countries that had not revised their constitutions for hundreds of years but there were groups in this country who wanted the Malaysian Constitution amended after only 30 years.

Dr Mahathir said these groups even had suggestions as to who should sit on a commission to review the Constitution and they wanted only like-minded people.

There were also proposals that the commission should be made up of jurists and judges from other countries.

"These people will not be able to understand our traditions and background and other issues affecting the people.

"For this pressure group, justice is the type of justice they want. We cannot bow to their pressure without considering the majority. The *rakyat* must beware of their tactics."

The Prime Minister acknowledged that the existing Constitution had some "defects".

He said that while there was a provision for checks and balances in the make-up of Governments — Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary — it was not so in reality because one branch of Government considered itself to be exempted from criticism.

Such a situation would require a detailed study.

However, "the Government has no intention of doing so, our voice is the voice of the people, only the people have the right (to propose the revision)," he said.

To suggestions that a commission appoint leaders, he said this would not work as such a person would not be able to play his role effectively if he was not answerable to the *rakyat*.

He said the democratic system currently adopted was the best because it ensured that elected representatives honour their pledges to the people (or risk not being re-elected), whereas a Government formed by a commission (which assumed itself clever) would not care for the

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problems of the people.

He urged the people to keep the Constitution as it was and said that the Government would not bow to the views of lawyers but would have to consider the wishes of the villagers.

He said the Government was determined to speed up development in the rural areas and villages.

"This must be done if we want peace in the country. If there is great imbalance between towns and villages there will be trouble."

"We must defend democracy as it is and beware of the campaign that has begun to destroy it.

"The democratic system is the best for us. Let us defend it and the Constitution."