

PM raps Nik Aziz over 'hitmen'

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HO CHI MINH CITY, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he was surprised and disappointed that the Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Aziz Nik Mat had found it fit to make use of *gedebe* (hitman) to carry out punishments under the Pas Government's proposed *hudud* laws.

Nik Aziz had said Kelantan had no problem carrying out such punishments as cutting off hands of convicted thieves or stoning adulterers as there were many *gedebe* or hitmen in

the State. "I am disappointed that Nik Aziz had taken the matter of *hudud* laws so lightly by leaving the execution of *hudud* punishments to hired hitmen," Dr Mahathir said when commenting on the victory of Barisan Nasional in the Bukit Payung State by-election.

He congratulated the Terengganu Barisan Nasional, the Menteri Besar, Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, and party members for the success and thanked them for their hard work.

The victory, he said, had

not only vindicated the BN, but had confirmed that it lost the seat in the general election because Pas had resorted to an undemocratic mean by stopping BN supporters from casting their votes.

Dr Mahathir said some 2,000 Pas supporters had encircled several hundred BN supporters despite being advised by the police not to do so.

But the 200-strong police force had not acted beyond that for fear of aggravating the situation.

This time, he said, more

police personnel were sent to Bukit Payung and the voters had been able to exercise their rights without intimidation.

The victory, Dr Mahathir said, also reflected the failure of Pas to use the Ruler's issue and the ineffectiveness of its efforts to tarnish his image by circulating several books about him.

Asked what books he was referring to, he said there was a book in particular, but declined to name it.

Dr Mahathir said it was sad that Nik Aziz, who accused him of lacking knowl-

edge in Islam, had taken the implementation of the *hudud* Law so lightly as to depend on *gedebe*.

He said, as a Malay and *tok guru* (religious teacher), Nik Aziz should be more careful in making statement on an important matter like Islam.

"I may not be as knowledgeable as Nik Aziz in certain aspects of Islam. But I am quite sure that there are some aspects of the religion that he does not know. There are books that I read about Islam that Nik Aziz does not," he said.