

REAL POWER

Ballot box the way to express your feelings, says Dr M

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KUALA KANGSAR: The real strength of the nation lies in the hands of the people and not street demonstrators, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the ordinary people had minds of their own and they normally registered their feelings through the ballot box in general elections by electing those whom they think can fulfil the people's aspirations.

"But because of this *serangan biadap* (rude attack), they feel disappointed and humiliated and thus they register their stand," he said in reference to the outburst by Malaysians over United States Vice-President Al Gore's interference in Malaysia's affairs when he praised the so-called *reformasi* movement last week.

Gore had lauded supporters of the movement, whom he described as "the brave people of Malaysia," at a dinner organised by the Apec Business Advisory Council on Nov 16.

Apec leaders and Asians joined Malaysians from all walks of life to round on Gore for his provocative remarks over the past week.

Commenting on the recent outburst by the people who had lashed out at the United States through mail signature campaigns, Dr Mahathir said:

"I am proud of their stand because this is the real strength of our nation. Our strength does not lie in the hands of those who demonstrate in the streets.

"Our strength is the ordinary people who have their own stand which they will state during elections," he said, adding that these ordinary people were not interested in politics.

"They know what they want," he told reporters after visiting the Mariwasa Kraftangan Sdn Bhd handicraft factory here.

On the Information Ministry's nationwide campaign called *Cetusan Perasaan* (Outpouring of Feelings), Dr Mahathir said the move would enable ordinary people who did not know where to voice their opinion to state their stand.

Asked whether the Barisan Nasional government foresaw any difficulty in the next general election, especially with the usage of the Internet, the Prime Minister agreed that the next general election would be "a bit difficult."

He said the ruling party could also use the Internet and let the people decide which party they wanted (*see story on Page 2*).

On the Barisan's Youth leadership forum held at Ulu Kenas, here, which he closed earlier in the day, Dr Mahathir said the

forum was to explain latest political developments.

He said certain quarters were garnering support by propagating hatred for the Government.

"It has even reached a level where my photograph has been shown to children, and they were told that the head of such persons should be chopped off," he said.

Dr Matahir said he was not offended but saddened that the minds of young children were being poisoned by their parents and teachers.

On what action the Government would take to check the situation, Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to promote noble values among the people.

"We have been talking about this for a long time but there are people who stop others from listening," he said.

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