

POLLS DARE

Get into the arena, PM tells 'reformasi' group

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KOTA KINABALU: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday took on the "so-called reformasi" movement and asked them to get into the arena during elections if they wanted a change of leadership.

The Prime Minister said these people staged protests supposedly for changes and to reform the country.

"What kind of *reformasi* do they want? Do we want our country to end up like other countries where the races cannot live in peace? Our peaceful country does not need protests and riots. Our country is democratic.

"If there is any desire to change the leaders, *sila turun ke gelanggang* (enter the arena) when election comes," he said to loud applause from the crowd attending the Sabah Barisan Youth rally at the Likas sports complex.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a two-day visit to Sabah, said if those calling for *reformasi* really had the support of the people, then they might win in the elections.

"(But) people who cause chaos and demonstrations are not confident of winning elections. At that time (elections) we will see the Barisan Youth move.

"We don't have to tie cloths on our heads and shout. We don't have to burn motorcycles, we don't have to look for molotov cocktails.

"What we need in Barisan are level-headed thinking and sobre minds. With such thinking and minds, we will see who will form the government," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Youth would determine who would be the country's future leaders.

"You will inherit what we have built.

If we destroy what we have built, the future generation will inherit only ashes," he said.

He also said that the transition from old to young leaders in the Malaysian leadership was something that took time.

"The old leaders now were young once. Although it has been a long time, I still remember that when I was young, I wanted to play a role but I had to wait for the transition from the adult to the young that took time," he said, adding that it took him 36 years in politics before he became Prime Minister.

"There are some people who come into Umno for two days and want to become leaders.

"They cannot wait and want to remove the existing leaders. Although (those at) the top have said that the leadership will be handed over, they become impatient," he said, adding that these people then tried to overthrow the leaders.

Dr Mahathir said they would plot to do anything, and this included making friends in and outside the country to help them take over the leadership.

These overseas friends would come to Malaysia and criticise the country when the plots failed, he said.

"We will determine Malaysia's future, others cannot interfere. They are not free from corruption. They are big liars and when something is wrong, their friends defend them," Dr Mahathir said.

He said those who accused Malaysia of being undemocratic and claimed that its judiciary was not independent should look at themselves in the mirror.

"In our country whoever is wrong will go to court even if they are from the same party as us," Dr Mahathir said, adding that "our country is our responsibility."