

LAW BREAKERS⁴⁰

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Riots by 'reformists' hurting image of country, says Prime Minister

By ZUHRIN AZAMAHMAD

LANGKAWI: Those who rioted at Kampung Raru in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday night are law breakers and cowards, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"The groups calling themselves reformists seeking to uphold justice are the ones who are breaking the law," he said.

The Prime Minister branded the rioters cowards for using women and children as human shields when staging the demonstrations.

"Don't blame the Government if children are burnt during the rioting. The authorities have discovered Molotov cocktails and kerosene at the scene.

"No one benefited from the incident. Instead the country's image suffered," said Dr Mahathir here yesterday when reporters asked him to comment on the rioting.

Earlier, he launched the high-grade *Terus Maju* fertiliser at the Padi Museum.

Dr Mahathir said that since Malaysia was governed by laws he found it hard to understand how people who claimed to want reformation were resorting to violence.

"They said they want the law to be upheld but just look at what they are doing. Looking at what they have done, are they following the law? They are actually breaking it."

Dr Mahathir also claimed there was a similarity between the current *reformasi* street demonstrations and those organised by students and led by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in 1974.

"There is a similarity and the *dalang* (mastermind) could be the same person.

"If we look at the demonstrations, it is similar to those organised before Anwar joined Umno.

"In 1974, when I was the Education Minister, the students caused trouble and they used the same strategy," Dr Mahathir added.

When asked whether activist Hishamuddin Rais, who was picked up at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman on Saturday, was the mastermind behind the street demonstrations, Dr Mahathir said he was not sure.

"Anyway, it is possible that Hishamuddin is the mastermind too as he had never been thankful (to the Government)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the continuous street demonstrations would not stop Anwar's trial.

"Datuk Seri Anwar will still face charges according to the law of this country. Any attempt to avoid the case from being heard in court will not work."