

# Dr M: Up to the people to judge

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KUALA LUMPUR; Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it is up to the people to make their own judgment whether he has been selling out the Malays to the other communities as alleged by street demonstrators.

"(If it is true, then) I have been selling out the Malays for the past 17 years. So, there must be nothing else (for me) to sell," he said.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on accusations by some demonstrators that he must step down because he has been selling out the Malays.

According to some demonstrators, they want Dr Mahathir to step down to be replaced by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, allegedly corrupt-free, because only the sacked deputy prime minister could uphold the rights of the Malays.

Asked about the racial overtone, the Prime Minister said it was the demonstrators who were trying to turn the event into a racial situation.

"Of course they don't like this idea of a peaceful

Malaysia. They like a Malaysia in turmoil.

"We have a good image, so they want to destroy that image to show that we are just one of these countries that don't know how to govern ourselves," he said at a press conference after opening the HeliAsia '98 exhibition here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir also rebuked allegations that the police had planned the violent demonstration in

Kampung Baru here recently.

"If that is so, then the demonstration is not genuine. It is just organised by the police and made up of policemen. So who is supporting the *reformasi* if it is the policemen having demonstrations?" he asked.

The Prime Minister said the police did not use excessive force as only a water cannon was utilised to wet the demonstrators

a bit to dampen their spirit.

"The police have not beaten up these people. According to the wife of former deputy prime minister (Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail), the police had provoked the demonstrators.

"Even if the police provoked, why did the demonstrators come with petrol and molotov cocktails? Obviously they want to be provoked so that they can

have an excuse.

"If it is just a police provocation, then they would have come without any lethal thing such as sharp objects or carrying stones in their jackets," he added.

Dr Wan Azizah had claimed that protesters who clashed with the police were provoked by agent provocateurs.

On whether the police would have a crackdown on the protesters, the Prime Minister said:

"I don't know what you mean by cracking down, is it just beating them on the head or something like that? We have no intention of doing that. I think the police have no intention to beat up people.

"And people would have to pay a price unless you support some kind of police action," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that as a rule, demonstrations usually began by being peaceful but when no response was given or when the demonstrators failed to get what they wanted, they would escalate it and start becoming violent.

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He said it was because of that, that the demonstrations had to be stopped early before it got to the stage where people would get burnt or killed.

"This is not a Malaysian thing but these people are inspired by (events in) other countries to change the character and the tradition of Malaysia in order to achieve their own agenda," he said.

On Umno Youth's claim that some sacked party members might have been involved in the planning of the weekend violence, the Prime Minister said it might have been true because the demonstration was a duplication of the ones in Indonesia early this year.

He said the demonstrators wanted it to be more violent and carried out continuously to topple the Government.

"The most important thing is that if the Government is toppled, there will be no trial for the ex-deputy prime minister. Then of course he will get away Scot-free," he added.