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Use ballot box, not violence to voice unhappiness

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GROUPS unhappy with the Government should take note of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice to refrain from demonstrations, and contest in the general election.

Critics who accuse the administration of authoritarianism and repression, always seem to forget that the nation maintains a system of parliamentary democracy where free elections are carried out.

Every registered voter is entitled to choose, without coercion, whichever candidate he or she likes. If not, Kelantan would not be ruled by Pas and by-elections in Teluk Intan and Arau would not have fallen to the Opposition.

This practice has faithfully been upheld since independence, and there is no reason to doubt it now.

It is quite unnecessary to indulge in street protests and mayhem, which, as alarmingly exemplified in Indonesia of late, could turn ugly and result in injury and even fatalities.

This is not the way to endear the people to one's cause. In fact, it would alienate them further as the public would think twice before considering lending support to groups that indulge in unruliness.

During the period allocated for election campaigns, there are various avenues such as ceramah and house-to-house visits whereby the message can be brought to the voters.

Malaysians, in general, are a peaceful people who feel great uneasiness with the actions currently employed by the so-called reformists.

It is not the Malaysian way to gather and shout and cause pandemonium, as we have seen that apparently initially peaceful demonstrations tend to get out of hand. This need not have happened if there was no gathering in the first place.

It is hoped that individuals and parties who feel that they have been wronged, who perceive that there is injustice and who feel that they can do better than the Barisan Nasional Government, make efforts to join existing opposition political parties (or form new ones), and contest legitimately and in peace.