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PM: Demos not our way of expressing grievances

Farush Khan; Joniston Bangkuai; Joseph Bingkasan
TUARAN, Sat. - Demonstrations are "not our way" of expressing grievances, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

The Prime Minister said this in reponse to questions about demonstrations held in various States seeking support and sympathy for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the Opposition.

Members of Parti Keadilan Nasional today submitted 'public memorandums' to Rulers in several States. Tomorrow, a memorandum will be submitted to Istana Negara.

"This is typical of the Opposition," Dr Mahathir told a Press conference at the end of his overnight visit to Sabah.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, said if the BN wanted to, it could organise demonstrations "100 times bigger" than those held by the Opposition.

"But we do not resort to such things. It is not the way in Malaysia ... to hold demonstrations at every opportunity."

He said such people were not fit to contest in the general election, let alone form the Government.

On whether the charge against Repco Holdings Bhd executive chairman Low Thiam Hock was part of the Government's efforts to clean up the corporate sector, Dr Mahathir said:

"Whose friend is he? Is he Anwar's friend? I am very intrigued by this. Anwar had no cronies and yet a nobody who is arrested and charged suddenly becomes somebody who is close to Datuk Seri Anwar. So I think this Low must be someone very close to Datuk Seri Anwar."

Low was charged in the Sessions Court in Kuala Lumpur today with misleading the stock market on the price of his company's shares.

On whether there were problems that had possibly delayed the decision to call for general election, Dr Mahathir said:

"My opinion is that we (the BN) are given a five-year mandate (to govern). Elections are costly. Therefore, if it is not necessary, we do not call for election before the term expires. We do not decide to have elections for fun or on the spur of the moment."

On whether the good turnout during his trips to the various States had provided him with the impetus to call for the general election, Dr Mahathir said he had to assess the situation in the country before deciding.

On the election dry run held by the BN in various parts of the country, Dr Mahathir said he would have to study all the information and feedback before making any decision related to the election.

Asked to comment on his visit to Labuan and Sabah, he said he found the people supportive of the BN, unlike in the past (when Sabah was under the opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah government) when there were "glum faces".

This, he said, was because the people knew that the BN Government, which took over the State administration in 1994, was efficient and could deliver the goods.

Good support and large turnout, he said, were also evident in all the other States that he had visited.

In Shah Alam, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar today criticised the opposition for using mosques for their campaigning and trying to drag the Sultan into politics.

Mosques were meant strictly for religious activities and the opposition

could have used many other places to spread its political message, he said.

"Such actions are inappropriate," he told a Press conference after launching Selangor's 'Know and Love Your Rivers' campaign and the Selangor Water Management Board at Section 22, Persiaran Jubli Perak here.

In Ipoh, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib described the Opposition's attempt to involve the Rulers in politics as immature.

He said they should realise that a democratic Government and the Rulers were two separate entities.

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