

Opposition played dirty to win: Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri: The Opposition used all kinds of dirty tactics, including religious issues and thuggery, to win in the Lunas by-election, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the Opposition brought in large numbers of supporters from outside, adding that 120,000 "of their people were in Lunas on the night of the election".

"At other times they had about 100,000 supporters and this proves that they had brought them in (but) we do not know whether there were phantom voters among them," said Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman.

At the same time the BN supporters and workers who

were being ferried in 12 buses were prevented from entering Lunas.

"They did not go there to vote but to help the party in the election," said Mahathir.

He said the opposition party members also seized identity cards which is against the law and the BN "is checking whether any action can be taken against these people".

He also said the Opposition resorted to "acts of gangsterism and hooliganism and I fear if this is the Opposition's style, then the country will not remain to be in peace in future."

Mahathir said the Opposition played on religious issues including superimposing BN candidate S. Anthony-samy's body on that of a Christian preacher.

They also carried placards with the wording "Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa" and used the

vision school and the Suqiu's 17-point demands as the core issues.

"They said Muslims cannot vote for non-Muslims to convince the Malays to vote for them," he said.

As such, said Mahathir, the proposal by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu that the Election Act be amended to prohibit election candidates from bringing up religious and racial issues during campaigning "is valid".

"I think there are reasons for that. We find that people are breaking the law without action being taken against them, simply because they have the numbers. They think that if 1,000 or 100,000 people break the law there is nothing that the police can do," he said.

Mahathir, who is Umno president, earlier chaired the party supreme council meeting this evening.

He said the meeting discussed at length the Lunas defeat to Keadilan but noted the BN obtained more votes compared with the general election in November last year.

Mahathir also said his remarks on "extremist groups such as the Suqiu" should not be taken by the Chinese community as criticising all of them.

He said he has the right to comment on these small groups who "are extreme and are raising sensitive issues which can disrupt harmony".

Mahathir said the MCA and Gerakan probably "failed to explain" the vision schools concept in Lunas.

He said the BN had given a lot of privileges to the Chinese and they should not be ungrateful.

"When we receive something we must not forget to say thank you," he said.