

# PM: Polls laws may need to be amended

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'... to ensure supporters don't go overboard'

**KUALA LUMPUR, Mon:** The government will study the possibility of amending the election laws to ensure that supporters of political parties do not go overboard during election campaigns, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The move might be necessary following the action of PAS supporters in the Sanggang state by-election where they were reported to have contravened the election laws including campaigning exceeding the midnight deadline on the eve of polling day.

He said this after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting, which focused on the by-election.

Asked whether the Elections Act may be amended, he said: "It may be necessary but the important thing is its enforcement.

"We will table a report to the Cabinet and if there are good suggestions from the Cabinet, then we will submit them to the Election Commission. If necessary we will have new laws."

Mahathir said that if left unchecked, there were bound to be clashes between supporters of Umno or Barisan Nasional (BN) and the opposition party.

He said that the opposition party supporters had swarmed the Sanggang state constituency and they were there clearly to intimidate the voters.

"We found that in Chinese areas where the residents were likely to vote for the BN, they parked their cars causing a traffic jam and gathered in such large numbers that, in the morning, only 25% of the voters dare go out as they

were afraid there may be clashes or things like that."

He said that the same situation was faced by the Indian voters who were also intimidated by those supporters.

"Some 30,000 of the party supporters were in Sanggang, an average of three supporters for each voter, to the extent that they were blocking the way to the polling station."

The police, Mahathir said, were forced to erect barbed wire fencing to provide a passage for the voters.

He said they issued all kinds of threats and uttered

obscenities to Umno supporters. "But even though they had obstructed the running of the election, the election could still proceed."

However, he said, the BN won and secured the support of the people, with a bigger majority compared with the general election last year.

"We will conduct a follow-up to ensure that such a thing will not recur in future... we have ample proof in the form of pictures to show the behaviour of the PAS supporters, and their large number."

Umno, he said, will request for the Sanggang elec-

toral roll from the Election Commission to determine whether any of the 900 people whose names were removed had moved out or died.

What was clear, he said, was that the names of 12 Umno members who had voted during the Nov 29 general election were among them, but they were still living there.

Asked to comment on Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Hadi Awang's claim that the BN's victory in Sanggang was due to money politics, Mahathir retorted by asking for proof.