

# Choose govt through polls, says Mahathir

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PAS criticised for allowing members to take to the streets

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**KUALA SELANGOR, Fri:** Those who understand the system of democracy in the country should use the next general election to choose the government they like and not try to topple the government through unrest, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

If the people do not like the existing government, they can choose another government, he told a meet-the-people session attended by about 5,000 people at the Melawati Sports Complex indoor stadium, here.

The prime minister also hit out at PAS leaders, saying they always championed democracy but did not stop their supporters from participating in street demonstrations that could lead to rioting.

“Fadzil Noor (the PAS president) talks about democracy but at the same time, allows his supporters to take part in demonstrations,” he said.

These people did not understand the meaning of democracy, Mahathir said, adding that if they did, they would wait for another five years for the next general election when they will be able to contest.

However, this must be done with proper ethics and laws and not by blocking voters from exercising their rights, he said.

If the people decide to choose the existing government, it is their right and the decision must be accepted by all quarters, he added.

Mahathir said that in carrying out their duties, law enforcement authorities would have to use force if those breaching the law resorted to force.

“There is no other way to control the situation if any

group resorts to violence,” he said.

The prime minister said police never acted in an extreme manner except against those who ignore their orders.

He said: “The law provides

punishment and sentence for criminal offences which applies to everyone, regardless if the person is a government leader or the poor.”

He said some quarters think they have the right to use force in the name of democracy and justice to bring down the government.

He added: “The government is aware that some quarters plan to stage riots using explosives and other things to topple the government.”

“We know that they have gone to a neighbouring country and told their friends there that they wished to carry out what happened in that country ... riots caused by irresponsible people in order to topple the government.”

“That’s their intention, purportedly to seek justice and democracy.”

Also present at the gathering were Barisan Nasional component party leaders, Umno Kuala Selangor and Selayang division members, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, Selangor Umno liaison chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob.

Earlier, Mahathir, who is also the Umno president, had a closed-door meeting with Kuala Selangor and Selayang Umno division members for two hours at its headquarters here.

Mahathir, who was on a one-day working visit to Selangor, first went to Hulu Kelang, Gombak, where he met Umno members from Gombak and Hulu Langat at the Sri Keramat multipurpose hall there.