

# PM: Use of violence is short-sightedness

STAR 17 APR 2001

SHAH ALAM: Anti-government groups are short-sighted in using subversive and violent means to topple the administration because these elements will return to haunt them should they ever assume the leadership, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"They do not understand. Once rioting, instigation and violence become a way of life, it will be difficult to eradicate them from society.

"Those who use such methods to topple the Government must also be aware they will face the same type of pressure if they come into power," he said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said that a government which was faced with unending problems of internal fighting, street riots and outbreaks of violence, would be too busy quelling them to focus on development.

He cited the happenings in neighbouring countries as examples of chaotic societies which hindered plans for progress.

Dr Mahathir was thankful that Malaysia had not succumbed to the same kind of mob rowdiness.

Attributing the country's stability to its disciplined society, he praised the high level of professionalism shown by the law enforcers as well as civil servants.

"Some of you may have dif-

ferent political beliefs from those in power, but in carrying out your duties, you have no choice other than to follow the policies established by the Government elected by the people.

"Similarly, if the leadership of the country changes, it is the duty of the law enforcers and the civil servants to take instructions from the new leaders," he said.

Dr Mahathir said professionalism in work must always be upheld despite the persuasive anti-government messages spread by certain groups.

"Some people may be influenced and even sympathise with these groups because their arguments seem clear and valid.

"They claim to be fighting for justice but their intention is to overthrow the Government," said Dr Mahathir.

He cautioned against falling prey to subversive and covert anti-government campaigns.

"The instigation and persuasion usually start on a small scale. If we let our guard down, it will spread among the police, army, civil service, judiciary and others," he said.

On modern and high-tech crimes, Dr Mahathir said the police must keep up with the latest laws and gadgets to ensure they had sufficient knowledge to nab and prosecute the criminals.

"Those who violate the laws have the Internet to assist them. Take for instance the type of lies, misinformation and rumours spread through the Internet which could be easily downloaded and passed around," he said.

Dr Mahathir said those with bad intentions had also enlisted the services of lawyers who used their knowledge to get their clients off the hook.

"Times have changed. Therefore, the police must train their officers in specialised knowledge, be it in law, information technology, forensics or business, to curb the crimes.

"The police must remain strong and knowledgeable to keep society safe," he said.

Dr Mahathir also called on the public to discard their apathy and help keep the country safe.

He said the murder of Dr Joe Fernandez, the former Lunas state assemblyman, remained unsolved although he was killed in front of so many pairs of eyes.

On the use of force to curb street violence, Dr Mahathir said the Government would not hesitate to back the police for the safety of the larger majority.

"The Government will not accept police brutality, but will stand behind the police if force is used to curb violence," he said.