

PM: Specific site for assembly will be considered

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But some want to rally on the roads, says Dr M

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KOTA BARU, Fri: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government will consider the Human Rights Commission's (Suhakam) recommendation that the authorities determine specific outdoor areas, compounds and spaces for holding peaceful assemblies.

He said, however, the problem with the people involved in demonstrations is that they may not be satisfied if they are given a specific site to hold their assemblies because they want to hold rallies on the road.

While the government holds steadfast to democracy, it does not mean that the people can do anything they like, he added.

He said the government

does not want to see what is happening in another country, where the people can bring down a leader, rebel or fight against each other, happening here.

"This is not our way. We follow our own style where we have an election and the people can elect who they like," he told reporters after launching the Unit Trust Week here today.

On Suhakam's call to the government to review several laws including the Internal Security Act (ISA), Official Secrets Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act, Mahathir said the government has to safeguard the freedom of other citizens and not only the freedom of any particular group.

The demonstrations, for example, do not only affect the government but businessmen and petty traders, he added.

"The petty traders, in particular, are facing a difficult life. If they cannot do business for a day, it means they do not get any income for the day," he said.

"If they want to demonstrate in the sea or any other places, its okay. As long as they don't disturb other people."

On the government's decision to temporarily close its consulate in Pontianak and evacuate 13 staff and family members, Mahathir said the country may not accept foreigners in the country if its citizens in other countries are threatened just because the government takes action against foreigners in the country for any wrongdoing.

"We will study why they are threatening our consulate people because they are diplomats who should be safeguarded by the government of the country," he said.