

PM on Suhakam's proposal

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'Government will look into request for peaceful assembly'

KOTA BARU, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government will look at the request by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia to allow the police to identify an area for peaceful demonstrations to be held.

"We will look into it, but while we hold on to democracy, this does not mean that the people can do what they like.

"We do not want a situation where when you don't want a leader, you resort to violence.

"That is not the way. Our way is through general elections.

"If they like us they will elect us, if they don't, they can elect others," he said when asked to comment on the request by Suhakam.

Asked if demonstrations could be held peacefully if an area was identified for that purpose, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't think so. They will take to the streets."

He was speaking to reporters after launching Amanah Saham Didik at the Kota Baru Municipal Council hall.

Asked to comment on Suhakam's

request for a review of the Internal Security Act, Official Secrets Act 1972, Printing Presses and Publications Act 1994, which it said restricted "the freedom of speech and expression of the public," Dr Mahathir said it was their (Suhakam's) opinion.

"Our opinion is that if any one of us wants individual freedom to express hatred, the other party will lose their freedom. I don't think this is good.

"If street demonstrations are held, not only will the Government be threatened but the shop owners and small traders, among others, will also be threatened."

He said when a shop closes for one day, it meant that their earnings would be affected.

"These are the people whose interest we should also protect.

"We cannot give priority to those who take to the street to demonstrate.

"If they want to do so, they can do it in the sea.

"As long as they don't disturb others, it is all right," he added.