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No to street demos

STREET demonstrations should not be allowed to become part of our culture. And those who seek to use these as a means to overthrow the Government must be ostracised and roundly condemned. In a democracy, the people are free to elect a government of their choice, quietly and peacefully at the ballot box. Violence will only beget violence.

If the advocates of street rallies do not agree with the policies and leaders of the Government of the day they are entitled to their views. And if they think they can do a better job running the country, then they should wait for the next general election and make a bid for the people's mandate.

But they must absolutely abide by the law and the Constitution. They should not insult the public's intelligence by their arrogance and behaving as if the elected representatives who form the Government will have to give in to them or face the threat of demonstrations and other forms of illegal action.

Those who are trying to use street action as a means of bringing about change should be reminded that unlike many newly independent countries which cast away their democratic institutions after independence, Malaysians of all races and ethnic groups have co-operated to make democracy work.

Every peace loving and patriotic Malaysian should be proud of our democratic heritage which has enabled the country to make remarkable economic progress. However, the country's political stability founded on democracy and its hard-earned economic and social achievements will be thrown into jeopardy if large-scale illegal demonstrations which can turn violent and destabilise the country are allowed to continue unchecked.

The people should realise that any attempt to ape the street protests in other countries will only lead to a breakdown in law and order. The consequences of illegal demonstrations getting out of hand and damaging the country's investment climate and thus its economic prospects are too grave for us to tolerate unruly street action intended to intimidate the public and dictate the course of Malaysia's political future. The people should also be wary of the possibility of foreign involvement in this attempt to create confusion and chaos. Those who do not like Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's courage in standing up to the Western powers may be subtly manipulating street protests to serve their own agenda.

The authorities should not hesitate to send a stern message to those who are bent on undermining the stability of our multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Once this stability is fractured it will be difficult to put it back again. The emotionally-charged actions of power hungry and ambitious individuals in other countries have in some instances plunged their once peaceful countries into endless strife which cause untold suffering to innocent people.

As guardians of the people's peace and security, the police will have no choice but to take firm and resolute actions to enforce law and order if organisers continue to hold illegal rallies and demonstrations which could become violent. We strongly urge those who love this country to ponder the adverse effects of street demonstrations and illegal rallies. They should not be misled by people with narrow vested interests. They should instead think of the country's long-term survival and welfare which transcend

ideology, party or institution.

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