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Planners of protest slammed

Farush Khan

KUALA SELANGOR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today hit out at those who planned violent street demonstrations in their bid to topple the Government.

The Prime Minister also criticised Pas for talking in favour of democracy but at the same time allowed its supporters to riot.

He said they did not understand what democracy is all about.

"If they understand, they would be willing to wait for five years and go to the ballot box to elect the Government of their choice," said Dr Mahathir.

He was speaking to government officers and the people at the community hall here during a one-day visit to Selangor where he had a closed door meeting with Umno division leaders.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said this group of demonstrators were influenced by demonstrations carried out freely in a neighbouring country.

The Government would act against criminal activities according to the law irrespective of their positions, Dr Mahathir said.

"Whether they are prominent people or they are poor, when they violate the law, action will be taken against them. They will be taken to court and be punished.

"There is discipline in the country. If it is not observed, it will affect our lives ... there will be chaos," said the Prime Minister.

He said there were times when those who enforced the law were criticised and accused of violating the human rights.

"There are times when the authorities had to be tough when those who violate the law resort to violence.

"It would be useless when the law is violated and no effective action was taken."

He also praised the police for their professionalism in carrying out their duties.

"When the police had to be a bit tough, they were accused of violating human rights."

Dr Mahathir said the police had not been extreme in their action except against those who violated the law.

Normally, he said the police would try to solve problems amicably, adding that if there was no violence, there was no need for the police to act tough.

Dr Mahathir said there were people who carried out street demonstrations and riot in order to attract the world to criticise the Government.

However, it was known that there were those who tried to use explosives to topple the Government.

He said these people denied this but the Government knew they went to a neighbouring country where the rioters managed to topple the Government.

"That was why they were planning to carry out street demonstrations to topple the Government."

He said in this country the majority of the people and the civil servants understood their responsibilities and worked together.

He hoped this would be continued.

"Now we want them to co-operate with the private sector as well."

Among those present were Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, who is also State Umno deputy chief

and State party chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

Earlier in the day, Dr Mahathir attended a two-hour closed-door meeting with Umno Gombak and Hulu Langat divisional leaders and members at the Taman Sri Keramat community hall.

Also present was his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhamad Taib and his deputy Datuk Seri Dr Mohamed Khir Toyo, who is Selangor Menteri Besar.

Dr Mahathir later had lunch with some 1,500 people before leaving for Friday prayers at the Bandar Sri Damansara mosque.