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`Stop strong-arm tactics by Pas'

Ramlan Said; Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Government should take action to stop the use of violence and strong-arm tactics by Pas during elections, the Umno supreme council said today.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Umno was concerned that if nothing was done to check the trend, future elections could be marked by trouble and disturbances.

Besides voters being denied the chance to vote and husbands vowing to divorce their wives if they were to vote for Umno, there were reports of Puteri Umno members threatened with rape if they continued campaigning.

"I fear when Pas supporters no longer respect the police, stop buses and people (from voting), one day the police, in enforcing the law, might be forced to shoot.

"If this happens, we will see a riot in the country that will mar our image. So we must ensure these tactics are stopped," he said after chairing a three-hour supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn.

The Prime Minister said the council, which discussed the outcome of the recent by-elections in Anak Bukit and Pendang, found out that many people especially those staying in Pas strongholds disagreed with the party's tactics and supported the Government but did not voice their objections for fear of being boycotted.

On whether Umno's concerns were similar to the wider powers sought by the Election Commission to ensure campaigns were conducted in strict accordance with the law, Dr Mahathir felt the commission had also realised the gravity of the situation as it had also been abused during the by-elections.

Asked to elaborate on measures that should be taken by the commission, he said Umno would submit its report to the Government as soon as possible.

"We have a complete dossier on the matter with pictures, posters and evidence from people on how Pas resorted to violence and lies during the campaign."

Dr Mahathir said the council was satisfied with the party's performance, adding it lost in Anak Bukit because of dirty tactics employed by Pas.

He said there were reports of Pas supporters carrying parang and other weapons, threatening people especially the Chinese from voting and obstructing roads.

Their supporters were also moved from other constituencies to those where the party thought it had a better chance of winning.

"They put fear in the Chinese that there will be riots (if they vote). In Anak Bukit, some 600 Chinese were unable to cast their votes. The Malays and even Umno members were denied the chance to vote," he said, adding the Umno candidate would have won with a bigger majority in Pendang if not for Pas' dirty tactics.

Dr Mahathir said Pas, which claimed to champion Islam, had twisted and manipulated many of his statements for political gain like his criticism against the party's spiritual leader Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat who said that Allah was a gangster.

Although the Kelantan Menteri Besar was the one who made the remarks, flyers were circulated accusing Umno leaders of insulting Allah.

There were also flyers with a doctored picture of Dr Mahathir in shorts and Pas defending its Islamic criminal law passed by the Terengganu

Legislative Assembly.

"The flyers state Hudud does not victimise women. This is true as Hudud has never victimised women ... the laws that victimised women are the ones formulated by Pas."

Dr Mahathir was also asked whether he would reshuffle his Cabinet before leaving office in October next year, to which he replied: "I will tell you when it happens or after it has happened."

On whether the Cabinet at its meeting today decided that Mathematics and Science be taught in English in Chinese and Tamil schools, he said no decision had been made. He was of the opinion that the move would eventually be adopted in such schools.