

Mahathir shows up for Bersih 5, gives thumbs up
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Although he had a programme abroad, former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad returned to the capital city for the highly-anticipated Bersih 5 rally today amidst high tensions.

The country's fourth prime minister was seen wearing the yellow Bersih 5 T-shirt along with other participants at the Bangsar LRT station at 2pm.

He was with his son Mukhriz and former deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin, both of whom were also wearing the Bersih T-shirt.

Mahathir when met commended the "high turnout" for the Bersih 5 rally, despite threats and provocation, capped by a wave of arrests last night.

"There are many participants here today, but the government is cowardly.

"They want to prevent demonstrations, which is the right of the people, which is in the Federal Constitution," he said.

Asked if the rally is Chinese-dominated, a criticism that pro-government quarters had levelled against last year's Bersih 4, Mahathir says there is no question of race at the rally.

"Everyone is concerned about the government we have here now," he said.

'Police just doing duty'

On the turnout appearing to be poorer than Bersih 4, which saw over 100,000 turn up for the two-day rally, Mahathir said, "We have to keep on doing something [...] the government is using the police to prevent people from having a peaceful rally."

Commenting on the police blockade, Mahathir admitted they are doing their duty.

"But we are doing this peacefully. There shouldn't be blockades. This is what we say undermining democracy, it's not Bersih who is undermining democracy," he said.

Mahathir was earlier seen getting off a plane after attending an event in Sudan.

His appearance comes as a surprise, after he was reported saying he would not be attending the rally for electoral and democratic reforms.

The long-running former prime minister, who himself had been known to incarcerate his political enemies, raised eyebrows last year when he made an unannounced appearance at Bersih 4 and endorsed the people's right to assemble and their demands.

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