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Dr M: Gathering is a threat to court process

RESPECT THE LAW: Ex-PM reminds supporters Anwar has nine lawyers to defend him

KUALA LUMPUR

FORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his supporters should respect the law and not threaten the courts by planning to hold a gathering here on Monday.

He said the proposed gathering was a threat to the court process and put those involved in the judicial process under pressure.

"They should not be influencing the courts by issuing threats... for example, they will not demonstrate if the court rules in their favour," he said after delivering a keynote address to over 150 former high-ranking military officers, including former armed forces chiefs.

Anwar's supporters are said to be planning to gather in front of the Kuala Lumpur High Court on Monday. The day the court will give its

verdict on the sodomy case involving the opposition leader.

Dr Mahathir said if the opposition politicians believed in democracy, they should respect the country's laws and not be just good at talking about various regulations that the government should adhere to.

"This country has laws and regulations, but the opposition regards the (sodomy) case as a conspiracy, so they feel they need not follow the law. They say the planned gathering has to do with freedom of expression as provided by the Constitution, but it is clear their objective is to threaten the courts."

In his address titled, "Malaysia

Now and the Role Retired Military Officers Can Play", Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was fortunate compared with other countries which also gained independence because after more than 50 years, it still enjoyed stability.

"Malaysia is a lucky country, but the question is, are you all satisfied with the success achieved thus far?"

He said the Barisan Nasional government had been accused of being undemocratic and that it ruled with an iron fist, "but strangely, if this is true, Anwar would not have been able to go through the proper legal process and be represented by nine lawyers".

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad
former prime minister

Dr Mahathir also criticised to-

day's young generation that he said enjoyed the most, including the stability and development brought about by past leaders, but were now going against the government.

"With the wealth created, we have been able to send hundreds of thousands of our young to the West for higher education to improve their living standard. They are exposed to Western values and when they return home after their studies, they view the government as totalitarian."

On another note, Dr Mahathir thanked the armed forces for being always professional and never interfering in the country's political situation.

"You can sympathise with the opposition, but when you work with the government, you have to follow the rules, otherwise we will see a military takeover. But thank God, Malaysian soldiers are professional." **Baranana**