

# Don't play with fire, warns Dr M

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PENANG, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned certain people with "political interests" to stop questioning the impartiality of the country's legal process.

"They are playing with fire and will end up burning themselves," he told an 8,000-strong crowd who attended a people's tea party at the Seberang Perai Municipal Council padang in Butterworth.

The Prime Minister said these irresponsible people were trying to make a racial issue out of a recent court case and

were trying to act as "champions" of a certain community.

He said the punishment meted out to criminals by the courts is the same regardless of their racial origins.

"There is no basis for anyone to think otherwise. Those who wish to be champions should do so in other places.

## Poverty

"They should not try to inflame one community against another.

"We have seen the May 1969 racial clashes. We do not want this to happen

again."

Dr Mahathir said anyone convicted of a criminal offence is punished in accordance with the law be they Malay, Chinese or Indian.

"We should not pick out one of these criminals to be a champion of the community and forget that he is a criminal who has been convicted by the court," he added.

Earlier, during a visit to the integrated land development project at Sungai Chenaam, 20 kilometres from Nibong Tebal town, Dr Mahathir reminded the people that poverty cannot be eliminated through Gov-

ernment-funded programmes alone.

He said poverty would remain if the people did not endeavour to supplement the Government's efforts by putting their shoulder to the wheel to improve their standard of living.

"The Government, through the Agriculture Ministry, has been trying various methods to increase the earnings of the people here," he said.

Dr Mahathir said wealth or poverty did not depend on opportunities but rather on one's initiative.

He advised the people not to highlight communal issues but urged them to overcome whatever grievances they had through negotiations.

## Fish culture

Agriculture Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the Sungai Chenaam area used to be rather neglected but the situation had improved after the Government's efforts to develop the area.

The people's incomes, Encik Anwar said, had improved but the level was still unsatisfactory.

Deputy Agriculture Minister Dr Goh Cheng Teik said the income of padi planters in the Sungai Acheh area was still below the poverty level.

The integrated land development project of Sungai Chenaam is a new concept implemented on a co-operative basis by the State Government with the co-operation of the Agriculture Ministry.

Before the project was implemented, the whole area was swampland. A total of 1,250 people from 200 families are now living here.

Among their activities are cockle breeding, growing of coconut trees and the rearing of milch cows. Other projects being planned include vegetable and cocoa planting,