

DUNIA

WHAT

31 DEC 1985

MARTYRS?

Religion - Islam - Extremist

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Prime Minister described today as "sheer rubbish" claims that those killed in the Baling incident were *syahid* (martyrs) who died in a holy war.

"What holy war?" Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said after opening the Asean Chambers of Commerce and Industry at the Shangri-la here. "This claim is sheer rubbish. What is so holy about killing policemen who were out to do their duty?"

Dr Mahathir described the incident in which 18 people, four of them policemen, died as politically related and said it had occurred because of the extremism of certain people. "... Although PAS does not support this kind of action, the fact is he (Ibrahim Mahmud, the wanted man also known as Ibrahim 'Libya' who was one of those who died) got carried away," he said.

for the first time on the incident, also dismissed the PAS claim that rural poverty was the cause of the Baling violence in which Ibrahim's followers ambushed two groups of police who were looking for the wanted men.

There had been rural poverty, he said, since the time of the British. "There are also other places (besides Baling) which have rural poverty but why were no such similar incidents there?" he asked.

By PHILIP RODRIGUES

Besides, he said there were poor rural areas where the people still supported the Government.

If the Baling tragedy was caused by rural poverty, then because there was something like 20 or 30 per cent rural poverty in the country, 20 per cent of the population should be rising up, Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir also queried suggestions that the people of Baling were starving. "Why did they spend their money buying things that were not needed and made poisons and arrows?" he asked. "What rural poverty is this?"

He said PAS did not want to understand rural poverty, adding: "Show me anybody who has died because of rural poverty." The Government, he said, was quite willing to show PAS some places outside Malaysia where there was real poverty.

Dr Mahathir, whose home-state is Kedah, said PAS was trying to sensationalise the Baling incident by calling for a commission of inquiry. What PAS really wanted was a political issue and not an inquiry, he said. "The party is not interested in whether the country is peaceful or not," he added.

Dr Mahathir said there had already been an official inquiry into the incident as "all matters like this will have an official inquiry." But what the Go-

vernment did not want to do was to make a public show of the inquiry, thus giving political parties a field day.

He noted that although one person in PAS had said the Baling incident was not related to PAS, the party had not condemned it outright. (The party's deputy president Haji Fadzil Noor had said those involved in the incident had acted on their own and not on a directive from PAS.)

Dr Mahathir said: "I see that the others feel they should support this kind of action."

Dr Mahathir said that people co-

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Dr M: Police were so careful, they died

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not completely disassociate themselves from the fact that "this man (Ibrahim) had been a PAS candidate before." (Ibrahim had stood on a PAS ticket in two general elections but lost).

Dr Mahathir said the violence started because Ibrahim and the others had resisted arrest which was a crime. Thus, he said the police had to move in but they had been very careful -- "too

^{Baling} careful, in fact, "so much so that they themselves got killed."

The Prime Minister also said he had discussed the Baling case with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam just before he left for China.

He stressed that Datuk Musa had reported the whole incident to Parliament after he had left, not because it was going to embarrass him, but because until then "we had not received the full report from the police."