

# PM: Govt won't go on witch-hunt over BMF

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By SHARIF HARON

THE government has no intention to launch a "witch-hunt" by setting up a special prosecution team or a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the BMF loans scandal as demanded by the Opposition, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

A major reason is that such measures will continue to generate publicity out of anger on the BMF affair — and this is bad for the country's economy, he added.

Winding up debate on the motion of thanks on the Royal Address, he popped this question: "What use is the Royal Commission of Inquiry, except to launch a 'witch-hunt' with certain motives? The lost money will never be recovered.

"With the turmoil and publicity that will follow,

the trust of the people and the world in Malaysian banks and economy will be affected. Investment, be it local or foreign, will drop.

"In the end, the country will find it even more difficult to recover from the economic slowdown."

sible, recover some of the lost billions.

He reiterated that the government does not wish to allow the culprits to roam free and all necessary action will continue to be taken, ensuring, at the same time, that those innocent are

court to the extent that more of his evil doings will be exposed.

"He can also be accused of making false allegations because in the words of lawyers, defamatory statements made in the interest of the public are privileged, and this will hold good even if the information contained is false," he said.

Dr Mahathir added there are also people who are willing to defend the committee, in the event a libel suit is instituted against it.

The Prime Minister said the report by the committee is not a police investigation paper and the investigations carried out were neither thorough nor complete, and whatever is inside is not gospel truth.

"Actually, the responsible parties in the gov-

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Dr Mahathir said opposition calls for the setting up of a Royal Commission of Inquiry and "special prosecution team" only showed that they do not believe the BMF final report or have any faith in government agencies entrusted to prosecute criminals.

Actually, what should be done now is to take the necessary action to punish the guilty and if pos-

not victimised.

The Prime Minister disagreed with suggestions that the Committee of Inquiry into the \$2.5 billion loan scandal led by Auditor-General Tan Sri Ahmad Noordin Zakaria is not protected against legal action.

"The opinion of Malaysian lawyers is that whoever dares to file libel suit against the committee will be questioned in

## PM: No witch-hunt

ernment, that is the police and Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman, should investigate further before prosecuting anybody.

"Only when they are satisfied that there is a case may prosecution begin. There is no reason for a special prosecution team to be formed unless we wish to turn our backs on the normal legal process and replace it with a

"kangaroo court" as found in communist countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir said another point that has been too often forgotten is that the crime was committed in Hong Kong and the Malaysian government has no jurisdiction there.

What can be done is to give cooperation to the Hong Kong authorities, and this has been and is still being done.

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