

# They didn't care:

## PM takes to task those who sued Umno

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# Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the people who took Umno to court were not concerned about the interests of the party and the possibility of the party being ruled an unlawful society by the court.

The Prime Minister said they should have withdrawn their suit or refrained from suing Umno if they really had Umno's interests in mind.

"If they had been concerned Umno might be declared unlawful, they would have withdrawn their suit or not taken the party to court because anything can then happen," he told reporters when announcing the formation of the new Umno here.

Dr Mahathir was replying to allegations that he had failed to act to protect Umno's interests by invoking Section 70 of the Societies Act 1966 when this was within his powers as Home Minister.

(Section 70 of the Act states: *The (Home) Minister may at his discretion in writing exempt any society registered under this Act from all or any of the provisions of this Act.*)

### Branches

Eleven Umno members had sought a declaration from the High Court that the last April 24 Umno general assembly and elections were null and void. The Kuala Lumpur High Court, in dismissing the suit on Feb 4, had ruled that under the Act, Umno was an unlawful society "at that material time" because of the existence of unapproved branches.

Former Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said, in a statement last night, that the Umno leadership could have used its discretion under Section 70 of the Act to save Umno even before the suit was brought to court. "Unfortunately, this

was not done."

Dr Mahathir said it was strange the quarters concerned had not thought about this before the court made the decision.

"Surely they were also aware of the provision and should have told us they were willing for Section 70 to be applied, and by this have their case defeated," he said.

He said even after being informed by their lawyers that Umno might be declared unlawful if they persisted in pursuing the matter of the 30 unapproved branches, they still failed to drop the case.

"Now, they are trying to blame others. What we know is that if the case had not gone to court, Umno would not have been ruled unlawful," he said.

### Application

"All internal problems of Umno should be resolved by the Supreme Council, but they remained adamant in taking the case to court despite being told it could lead to Umno being declared unlawful," he said.

"But now they are saying we did not use Section 70. I don't know what other accusations will be hurled against Umno by people who do not want to accept the outcome of the elections at the last Umno general assembly."

Asked who among the former Supreme Council members are not in the new party's pro-tem committee, Dr Mahathir said: "We'll let you know later ... you can guess."

"If there are people who want to go elsewhere, we can't ask them to come with us ... people who hamper the party ... try to destroy the party and eventually got it ruled unlawful ... these we cannot accept."

Asked whether former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk

Musa Hitam was involved in setting up the new Umno pro-tem committee, he said those involved were Supreme Council members and Datuk Musa was not a council member.

Asked whether he would accept an application by Datuk Musa to join the new party, Dr Mahathir said: "We will consider it. Everyone can apply."

On Tengku Razaleigh, he said he was not the only person to decide on applications from people seeking to become members.

Dr Mahathir also said he had received a letter from former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman inviting him to be a member of the pro-tem committee seeking to register "Umno Malaysia". This application was rejected.

He said he and the other pro-tem committee members of the new Umno could not hold posts in other parties and as such could not accept the offer.

"Furthermore, their application to have the party registered has been rejected."

On Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat's appointment as pro-tem secretary, he said this was because former Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid was ill and in the United States.

He said Datuk Seri Sanusi left for the US on Feb 12. — Bernama