

PM: Semarak not aimed at idolising leaders

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KANGAR, Sun. — The Loyalty With The People Movement (Semarak) to foster closer rapport between Government and the people is not aimed at making specific leaders the object of a personality cult, the Prime Minister said today.

The Government did not intend nor encourage the people to adulate specific leaders, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when launching the Semarak campaign for Perlis at Sungai Batu Pahat, 12km from here.

"We want leaders to be loyal to the people. We want to create a close rapport between them. We don't want the leaders to stay aloof, where the people can only see them from afar or only during the runup to elections."

Dr Mahathir added that he put a stop to the adulation of leaders when he was appointed Education Minister in 1971. He then proscribed the naming of schools after Ministers or leaders still living.

The directive was extended to roads, buildings and historical places as well when he became the Prime Minister in 1981.

He said he rejected a request by Chief Minister Dr Lim Chong Eu to name the Penang bridge after him.

This, said Dr Mahathir, was a clear indication that his Government did not intend to have or allow any practice of idolising leaders.

"Unfortunately, my administration is now accused of trying

to foster a culture of adulation of leaders when it was the practice before to idolise leaders through according them the title of *Bapa* (Father) of this and *Bapa* of that," he said.

Semarak was launched with a noble aim and only those with bad intentions would cast aspersions against it.

The Prime Minister also accused certain quarters of turning the people of Kelantan against the federal leadership.

He said the Government learnt that these groups were now influencing Kelantanese Felda settlers in Pahang into disobeying the federal leadership and Government, and if not checked this would cause a split among the people.

Dr Mahathir said he was proud the majority of the people in Kelantan did not support the movement advocating provincialism.

This was indicated when the Pas-sponsored motion of no-confidence against Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Mohamed Yaacob was defeated in the State Assembly recently with all the Barisan Nasional Assemblymen voting against the motion.

The Prime Minister regretted the action by the groups and said it was a betrayal of the struggle of the Malays who had been united under the leadership of Datuk Onn Jaafar when opposing the Malayan Union plan during the British period.

He said he was also saddened by the actions of certain groups in this country which fed information to some Hong Kong-based newspapers and magazines to put out derogatory articles about Malaysia.

He said their actions were damaging the country and caused apprehension among foreign investors.

Earlier, Menteri Besar Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh said the people of Perlis had never idolised any leader because this was against the religion.

He said the grand welcome accorded the Prime Minister on arrival was one given to a leader who was dedicated to the country and people.

Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said in his speech that the loyalty given by the people to leaders would enable the leaders to discharge their responsibilities more effectively.

Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Osman Aroff and Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak were among those present.

After launching the State Semarak campaign, Dr Mahathir joined in a *gotong-royong* project to lay water pipes in the area.

He also visited 14 traditional houses built on a *gotong-royong* basis, one for each State constituency in Perlis.

About 15,000 people attended the function.