

PM: Opposition gambling

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Certain Opposition leaders, working within the Malaysian Trades Union Congress, are seeking to widen their influence to the extent of gambling with the fate of workers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said these leaders, particularly from Semangat 46 and the DAP, were using the labour organisation to promote their political interests.

He said: "They are prepared to gamble with the fate of workers to

gain influence and recognition from others."

Dr Mahathir, the Umno president, said he would highlight this in discussions with party members during his nation-wide tour which begins tomorrow.

Speaking at a Press conference after chairing a three-hour Umno Supreme Council meeting at party headquarters here, Dr Mahathir said:

"The nation-wide tour is not to counter allegations against us. We

are not in the wrong. But we need to tell party members about the actions taken by the Opposition."

The threats and intimidating tactics used by some Opposition leaders against civil servants in a certain State would also be discussed during his tour.

Last week, Dr Mahathir said civil servants in a certain State were being intimidated and threatened by leaders of an Opposition party to the point that they were unable to carry out their duties.

with workers' fate

The Prime Minister, whose visit to the Federal Territory tomorrow will be hosted by the Lembah Pantai Umno division, will conclude his tour on July 10.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the arrest of three Sabahans under the Internal Security Act recently was not politically-motivated.

He said the arrest of the three could be seen as having a politically negative effect on the Federal Government as it might give rise to a feeling of hatred against it.

Dr Mahathir said the arrest was a normal police action as they were free to carry out their duties without political interference.

"We do not play favourites when making arrests," he said.

Asked to comment on Sabah's request for higher royalty on petroleum, Dr Mahathir said Sabah should not protest the distribution of revenue from oil, including that from the State.

"In my opinion, it is coincidental that oil is found in certain places. We

regard this as being the property of the nation and under the protection of the Federal Government. The revenue from oil is therefore distributed to all the States," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the distribution was fair and the royalty of five per cent which Sabah was getting was a big amount.

"Sabah should not now protest. It did not (protest) at the time when we

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all used the oil revenue from Sarawak."

The council also discussed the general election, but Dr Mahathir said the date has not been fixed.

"The situation now is that the party is ready for the election. We can hold it anytime ... from now until October 1991," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the council agreed to extend the date for the closing of Umno branch meetings to July 15.

Present at the Press conference were deputy Umno president Ghafar Baba, Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamad Rahmat, party vice-presidents Tan Sri Wan Mohdhtar Ahmad, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Enck Anwar Ibrahim and Wanita Umno leader Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.