

Rumours about PM: Suspects nabbed

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Police have traced the source of rumours about the health of the Prime Minister to foreign elements and picked up several people here for questioning, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayub said today.

He said the people who were questioned after the rumours surfaced a week ago had since been released.

"Some admitted they were wrong and apologised for playing to the tune of the rumour mongers," he told a Press conference at the Pemadam headquarters.

Dr Mahathir, who yesterday broke fast in Jitra, had said he did not understand the aim of the rumours that he was ill.

Datuk Megat Junid declined to disclose the number of people who were questioned.

However, he said, the Government had traced the rumours to certain foreign

elements.

He said these elements wanted to see chaos in the country and foreign confidence in the economy erode.

"They are envious of Malaysia's achievements. They are unhappy with the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange which is doing well and our policy of not giving contracts to companies with Zionist links."

He said they were also against Dr Mahathir's vision of turning Malaysia into a developed country by the year 2020.

"And they are opposed to the Government's initiative to set up the Far-East economic bloc."

On Umno's call for amendments to the Sedition Act to discuss the role of the constitutional monarchy, Datuk Megat Junid, who is a Supreme Council member, said the party had studied the proposal and its implications.

"We feel there is no need

to amend the Act," he said, in reference to the one of the resolutions of the Umno General Assembly last year on the constitutional monarchy.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Badawi, said last night that the rumours about Dr Mahathir's health were malicious and spread by people with bad intentions.

"It may have originated from speculators to manipulate the stock market," he said after breaking fast at the International Youth Centre in Cheras.

Commenting on Deputy Prime Minister Encik Ghafar Baba's statement that stringent conditions be set if Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) sought to return to Barisan Nasional, Datuk Abdullah said this would be a wise move.

"It is necessary considering the background and the track record of the PBS," he said.