

Umno supports people unhappy with State palace

By Manan Osman and Tengku Sariffuddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Umno supports the people of Kelantan who showed their discontentment with their Ruler who has been meddling in politics, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister and Umno president said the open defiance by a group of people of Kelantan last Saturday showed that some people had lost their faith in the Ruler.

"If a Sultan is not recognised by the *rakyat*, he will lose his dignity as a Ruler," he told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting here today.

Dr Mahathir also said he was disappointed with the Kelantan palace for refusing to accept "the people's memorandum". He said this showed that the Sultan was being undemocratic since he was unwilling to acknowledge the people's views.

"Therefore, we (Umno) are not prepared to accept the rule of an undemocratic monarch," he said, adding that in today's world, only democratic governments would be acknowledged (by the people).

Asked whether the latest situation would affect the Government's relationship with the Rulers, Dr Mahathir said ties were normal.

Dr Mahathir denied an allegation made by Kelantan

Meriteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that the gathering was one way whereby the Federal Government was trying to topple the Pasled State Government.

He said if the Federal Government really wanted to do this, there were various means, such as restricting Federal grants to Kelantan.

However, he said the Government would not resort to such actions.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that there was no need for Umno to hold the gathering (to topple the State Government).

"This is just a small matter. But we are ashamed that the Ruler has tarnished the image of the constitutional monarchy," he said.

Asked to comment on DAP Member of Parliament

Karpal Singh's statement that Tengku Ibrahim Petra could not use the Special Court to try Rulers to lay his claim to the Kelantan throne, Dr Mahathir replied that that was his opinion.

"Lawyers have different opinions. One says one thing while another says another thing... if all lawyers have similar opinion, there would be no need for trials," he said.

Tengku Ibrahim, the executive chairman of Petra Finance Berhad, said to be the rightful heir to the Kelantan throne, decided to assert his birthright in an announcement last week.

He is exploring all means, including seeking redress in the Special Court, to pursue the matter.