

Be more sensitive, PM tells authorities

By Alex Choong and Saodah Elias

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed authorities, including the police, to exercise greater care when carrying out raids on suspected illegal workers in places of worship.

The Prime Minister said the authorities should in future be more careful when carrying out such operations to avoid allegations that they were inconsiderate towards the religions of others.

He was asked to comment on a raid by police and immigration officers at St John's Cathedral in Jalan Bukit Nanas on March 26 where over 1,200 Filipina maids were rounded up.

In the operation, 711 maids were detained. All but 32 of them were later released after their work permits were produced by employers.

Those still in police custody were suspected to have committed offences.

"It is unfortunate that such a thing happened in a church compound. But before this, we carried out such exercises in mosques where illegal Muslim immigrants were detained," he said, adding that there were no complaints and the issue was not reported or highlighted.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Home Minister said, in this case, people were quick to complain because of the perception that just because the majority in the Government was Muslim, it was

inconsiderate to other religions.

Asked whether the Government would apologise for the raid, he said, there was no reason to do so.

"We do it to everybody," he told newsmen at a Hari Raya gathering for newsmen at the Equatorial Hotel hosted by Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Parliamentary Secretary to the Information Ministry Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman, senior editors and veteran journalists.

To another question on Umno leadership, four months after the party election, Dr Mahathir said there were no problems within the party.

"The problems are those

imagined by other people and wishful thinking on the part of those who would like to see us with problems. These are minor things which we have always been able to overcome in a very short time.

"We have now a good team which can work well together," he added.

On the recent Lundang by-election, Dr Mahathir said it was important to note that the number of votes for Barisan Nasional had increased but not for Pas.

He said despite having raised and created many issues like *hudud* laws, about making Sunday a public holiday in more States, Pas had failed to increase the number of votes for its candidate.

Dr Mahathir, who said

there was still room for improvement in Umno's election machinery in Kelantan, added that there was no need to revamp the Umno line-up in the State.

On the recent G-15 meeting in New Delhi, he said the group decided that there were certain parties which might renege on their commitment towards the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and might want to put in conditions which would be detrimental to developing countries.

The meeting, therefore, agreed that the G-15 Ministers attending the GATT meeting in Marrakesh in Morocco should meet one day to formulate a uniform stand.

"We have always anticipated that this kind of things to happen," he added.