



PM: No attempt made to exonerate Rahim

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there was no attempt within the Government to exonerate former Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik from allegations that he had sexual relations with an underaged girl.

He also hinted that it was unlikely that Rahim would be brought back to active politics because Umno leaders must be "clean and seen to be clean".

Dr Mahathir said he was disappointed that even some Umno members had voiced suspicion about an alleged pact to clear Rahim

of the allegations.

"This is not a question of a pact but a question of law," he said at a Press conference at the end of the day's Umno general assembly proceedings at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the controversy over Rahim's alleged involvement with a 15-year-old girl from Malacca recently.

The issue led Rahim, who was also Umno Youth chief, to resign from all government and political posts.

Attorney-General Datuk Mohtar Abdullah, however, cleared Rahim on Oct 21

saying there was not enough evidence to charge him in court.

Dr Mahathir reaffirmed his stand that the law should be upheld.

"If we do not want to believe in the Attorney-General, whom we have trusted previously, then it is a problem. If we choose to believe in the Attorney-General only when his decision is in our interest, then he is not an A-G," he added.

Asked whether there was any chance that Rahim would be allowed to make a political comeback, Dr Mahathir said Umno subscribed to the belief that its

leaders must not only be clean but be seen to be clean.

Rahim has done something which has exposed himself to accusations.

"This is what the party feels. If the party changes its stand tomorrow, then I cannot say anything."

Asked whether this clearly proved to be the end of Rahim's political career and whether this episode served as a warning to other Umno leaders, the Prime Minister said:

"I wish to remind members that we should not do something which exposes ourselves to aspersions that

we are involved in unhealthy activities."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to elaborate on his speech which touched on retired politicians, particularly former Umno leaders, who chose to distance themselves from the party.

He said it was not proper for such leaders to be elder statesmen who turned against the party which had brought them success.

"When I retire, I will not become an elder statesman who goes against Umno. I will continue to give my support if it is still needed. Otherwise I will just keep quiet."