

# Leaders must be clean and seen as such

GOVERNMENT leaders must not only be clean, they must also be seen to be clean, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, adding that it would not be enough for them to be genuinely clean but viewed otherwise.

The Umno president and Prime Minister said that Government leaders must also not do anything that could trigger negative impressions of them.

In his address when opening the Umno general assembly yesterday, Dr Mahathir also spoke of newspapers which normally ignored poison-pen letters but of late acknowledged them as credible sources.

Dr Mahathir said: "Newspapers turned rumours into truths and legitimised them as the basis for probes, criticisms and passing judgments."

While many seemed to realise that justice in Pas was cruel, it appeared that others too were prone to cruel acts.

"We are very keen to pass judgment. We listen to only one side of the story, and even when the source is a poison-pen letter, we believe that the person is guilty.

"Does this mean that poison-pen letters can be trusted? What are the motives of poison-pen letters? Where is the sense of justice?" the Prime Minister asked in an apparent reference to the allegations against former Umno Youth head and Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik.

Dr Mahathir also highlighted what he termed as the "even though syndrome."

He said: "Recently, a British newspaper had reported something about our country. According to the newspaper, even though Malaysia looked developed, even though the economy grows at eight per cent per year, even though inflation is low, even though it's peaceful, even though its foreign investments are high, even though there is no industrial action, the truth is that Malaysia is on the verge of destruction.

"This 'even though' syndrome or illness has also afflicted us. Even though the Attorney-General has decided that there is no case, even though the dates mentioned were not accurate, even though the party making the allegation was clearly lying, the truth is that the allegations were more accurate than the evidence suggests.

"That being the case, some quarters feel that we should just ignore the facts and continue with the hounding, criticisms and sentencing.

Dr Mahathir told the assembly that someone even quoted this line "It is not that I love Caesar less, but that I love Rome more" from Shakespeare's play, *Julius Caesar*.

The Prime Minister said: "I wish to recall that the Roman who said this was Brutus, Caesar's adopted son, who, together with Cassius and other plotters stabbed and killed Caesar.

"When Brutus stabbed Caesar, the foster father looked at the adopted son in the eye and said '*Et tu Brute...*', fell and died.

"Can we use Brutus as an example? Politicians often provide noble excuses when committing wrongs. Such was Pas with Islam and Brutus with Rome," he added.