

# 'Mohamad Sabu courting arrest to divert attention'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Pas deputy Youth leader who was caught last month for *khalwat* in Kota Baru seemed to be challenging the police to arrest him, believing that this would divert the people's attention from his case.

Mohamad Sabu, who has been touring many towns to publicly defend himself, was hoping that if the police arrested him for statements he made during his road shows, a new issue would be created and the people would forget about his *khalwat* case, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir, addressing a big gathering of Umno divisional and branch leaders at the Putra World Trade Centre here today, said: "We do not want the people to forget (the case) until the election."

However, Dr Mahathir said the Government was monitoring Mohamad's speeches and action would be taken against him if he went overboard in his *ceramah*.

Nevertheless, in line with democracy, Pas would still be allowed to continue organising *ceramahs*.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said this in reply to a question from the floor during a question-and-answer session after addressing the gathering.

He was asked whether the Government would be taking any action against Pas which appeared to be capitalising on Mohamad's *khalwat* case to organise political rallies and collect donations.

Mohamad was caught by Kelantan religious officers for allegedly committing *khalwat* with a married woman in a hotel room in Kota Baru on Jan 31. He was to have been charged yesterday but his case has been postponed indefinitely.

Furthermore, if the police picked him up, Pas would put the blame on Umno, Dr Mahathir said, adding that the Government would not resort to any action that could give Pas more political mileage.

Dr Mahathir said he could not accept the fact that Mohamad's *khalwat* case was an advantage for Pas.

He said if the person arrested was an Umno deputy Youth leader, Pas would have done everything possible to run him down.

He said Umno should capitalise on the issue to its advantage as Mohamad was apparently caught in a locked room with someone else's wife.

He said Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Aziz Nik Mat's claim that the *khalwat* was planned by Umno could not be true, unless he was caught with an Umno Wanita member.

Dr Mahathir said: "Mohamad was caught with a Pas *muslimat* (women's wing member) and the raiding party comprised its own

people."

Dr Mahathir also questioned the motive behind the postponement of the case by the Kelantan Syariah Court.

He said Nik Aziz should have allowed the case to be settled in court instead of defending Mohamad.

He said in the case of former Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik (who was alleged to have relations with an underage girl), Umno did not defend him.

He was cleared by the Attorney-General and then willingly stepped down.

On the collection of donations by Pas, Dr Mahathir said action could be taken if there was proof that the party was using force in getting people to donate.

However, so far there was no such proof, he said.

Asked why the Umno president did not use his office as the Prime Minister to direct the Registrar of Societies to drop the word "Islam" from Pas' (Parti Islam SeMalaya) name, Dr Mahathir said Pas would successfully turn the move into a political issue if Umno could not effectively explain the matter to the people.

Even now, he said some Umno leaders were afraid to tackle the issue as they claimed that it was difficult to explain this to the people.

"If that is the case, how can Umno defend itself if it is made an issue by Pas," he said.

On the dissolution of Parliament to pave the way for

a general election, the Prime Minister said he would do so when he had the inspiration.

However, he said Umno was always ready (for the election) and even today's function was part of the election process.

Dr Mahathir had earlier given a briefing to the gathering on what he thought were Pas tactics to mislead the people by using religion.

Later, speaking to the Press, he was also asked to comment on allegations by Pas that the Kedah Government had paid RM70 per sq foot to acquire his land to build a memorial in the State.

Dr Mahathir said this was a lie. He said Mohamad, who made the accusation during his road shows, should furnish evidence to support the allegation.

"The allegation is not true. If he is willing, he should bring evidence to show I sold my land for RM70 per sq foot.

"I challenge Mohamad (Sabu) to prove that the State Government bought the land," he said.

In his *ceramah*, Mohamad said Dr Mahathir had belittled the people of Kerpan who received a small sum of compensation when the State Government acquired their land recently.

Mohamad said the people in Kerpan received only RM1,000 per *relong* for their padi field as compared to the Prime Minister who received RM70 per sq foot when his land was acquired.

A group of 40 landowners

had demanded a compensation of RM50,000 for each *relong* acquired for a prawn-rearing project and an alternative housing site. But 90 per cent of the affected landowners had agreed to sell their land at RM15,000 per *relong*.

Dr Mahathir said, however, the Kedah Government had once acquired land measuring two *relong* belonging to him to build a road. But he received only RM8,000 in compensation.

He said he had bought the land for RM4,000 in 1967 before he became a Minister.

Dr Mahathir said: "I did not complain that I did not get more nor did I protest. They can check the record at the Kedah Land office."

Dr Mahathir also said he did not own land in Langkawi although he could have bought knowing that the island would be turned into a duty free port.

He also rejected offers made by the Kedah Government to alienate land for him.

On the Pas claim that a memorial would be built in honour of him, the Prime Minister said the Federal Government did not intend to build such a place for him in Langkawi.

He said the proposal was to build an exhibition centre in the island to house the many gifts given to him by various people including foreign Governments for public viewing.

"I have handed all the gifts given to me to the Government, whether it is cars or other things," he said.