

Dr M: Mohamad Sabu did admit to 'khalwat'

TEMERLOH, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he was not questioning the Kelantan Syariah Court's decision to acquit former Pas deputy youth chief of a *khalwat* charge when he went about expressing his views on the matter.

"I don't question the court's decision. The court is within its right to determine (the outcome of the case) on the basis of technical evidence.

"But the fact remains that he (Mohamed Sabu) himself admitted that he was in the room with a woman... that is all I pointed out," he said when asked whether he was committing contempt of court by questioning the Syariah Court's decision in the case.

"He (Mohamed Sabu) admitted being in the room with this woman. By definition, being in a room with a woman who is not a *muhrim* (a close blood relation) constitutes *khalwat*. That is all I am saying. I don't think that the court wants us to be gagged without being able to say anything.

"We are within our right to make our views known," he told reporters after a meet-the-people session here today.

Asked whether a book entitled *Jenayah Akademik Pemimpin Umno* (Umno Leaders' Academic Crimes), published by Pas, which talks of Umno being a secular party and unIslamic, would have a negative impact on Umno in the general election, Dr Mahathir said the book was a slander by Pas.

"Pas is an expert when it comes to slandering."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had tried to implement Islamic laws practically and pragmatically.

"For instance, as Islam forbids *riba* (usury) we introduced Islamic banking in the country and implemented the *takaful* insurance. To make it easier for Muslims to perform the *haj*, we have Tabung Haji."

Dr Mahathir said to upgrade the welfare of Muslims, the Government had trained them in all fields so that they would be on par with others.

However, he said, being Islamic for Pas meant wearing turbans and sporting beards... "that is all".

"I think the people can evaluate for themselves who actually champions the religion and its teachings."

On the move by Parti Bersatu Sabah to contest in Penang without the consent of the DAP, Dr Mahathir said he could not say anything as it was its right.

"However, I do not understand why they want to contest in Penang. Is it their intention to form a Government in Penang?" he asked.

He said it was difficult for the PBS to form a Government in Penang but then it was also difficult for the DAP to establish one.

On DAP heavyweights being fielded in Penang under its Tanjung Three project, Dr Mahathir said he did not think they would be a threat to the BN.

"This is their tactic. They field their heavyweights and then appeal to the people not to make their candidates lose as they claim the DAP will then be wiped out."

On how the BN Government was going to tackle the land acquisition issue, Dr Mahathir said it was no longer an issue but the Opposition kept harping on it and blowing it out of proportion.

"Any Government in the world has to acquire land from the people. Otherwise how are they going to bring in development, especially when the country is trying to become more advanced?" he asked.

He said even the Pas-led Kelantan Government acquired land for development, adding that what was required was that the acquisition should be done appropriately.

On his visit to Pahang, he said the reception accorded him was overwhelming and he was confident that the BN would make a clean sweep of Pahang in the election.

Earlier, during a meet-the-people session at the municipal square here, Dr Mahathir said the relentless efforts of the BN Government to bring development to the people had uplifted

their standard of living.

He said in the past the country was dependent on tin and rubber exports for its revenue.

"Exports of these commodities brought in an annual income of barely RM1 billion, but today 78 per cent of Malaysia's revenue comes from manufactured goods amounting to RM150 billion a year, an increase of 150 times."

Dr Mahathir said this achievement was the result of the BN Government's continuing efforts to reduce dependence on primary commodities and improving the livelihood and income of the people.

More than 10,000 people braved the scorching sun to listen to Dr Mahathir.

He said the country's efforts to industrialise had paid off and this had led to the creation of a lot of jobs and increased prosperity.

"We have the expertise and we can achieve our vision of seeing Malaysia join the ranks of developed nations by the year 2020.

"Although we have the capability we do not wish to

become arrogant or blow out our trumpets.

"This is unlike the Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat who claims that he is more capable of becoming the Prime Minister.

"He is unable even to develop Kelantan as he has promised. How then is he going to develop the whole country?" he asked.

Earlier, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said the Pas allegation that Pahang had raped its forests was baseless as 61 per cent of the State was still covered by virgin jungle.

"It is true that we depend on logging for 70 per cent of the State's revenue at one time. But now the bulk of the income comes from manufactured goods."

Also present were Dr Mahathir's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Pahang Umno deputy liaison chief Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and Pahang MCA chairman Datuk Lim Ah Lek.