

Opposition 'desperate, resorting to rough tactics'

JELI, Sun. — The Opposition parties' rough treatment of representatives from the mass media, including yesterday's assault on a TV3 crew, shows their desperation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said he was informed of the incident and was awaiting a full report.

"I heard that the TV3 crew was roughed up and its camera damaged," he said in response to reporters questions after a meet-the-people session in Kampung Nangka, near here.

In the incident in Kuala Kedah, two TV3 crew members said they were beaten up by Pas supporters while they were recording the proceedings.

Dr Mahathir said the Gov-

ernment would take action against anyone who harmed members of the mass media.

To a question whether the Opposition is becoming more aggressive in their campaign, the Prime Minister said they seemed desperate and had resorted to "rough" campaigning.

"Even the DAP chased away a TV crew covering their functions."

Dr Mahathir said he had many dealings with different types of people from the mass media, but had not resorted to rough tactics.

He added that he had declined a request to be interviewed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation yesterday because the latter only criticised the Government.

"I only decline to be interviewed and ask them to go

back and continue their false reports. But, we do not chase them away or beat them up."

In Penang, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the attack on a TV3 crew showed the extremist attitude of Pas.

"Even before they win in the election they take rough and harsh action. It means their leadership has failed to control the extremist attitude. In fact, their leaders too encourage this in their speeches," he said.

"This is the problem: when leaders of an irresponsible party, using the Islamic banner, incite hatred and take the law into their own hands. When they take the law into their own hands this is what happens."

Anwar said the Government could not allow such

things and that is why it had always maintained that security was paramount in Malaysia.

"If they can do this to a TV crew, they can do it to anybody else," he added.

Asked if the Government would beef up security at such gatherings to protect journalists, Anwar said:

"We will protect journalists and members of the public. As journalists you have to do your job, you have to cover what you have to cover.

"After all, these talks are public meetings. Why do you want to disallow a certain media group from covering?"

"At all BN talks, people from the *Rocket* and *Harakah* are there. We do not take this as an issue. They have manipulated our facts.

"Why do they deny a private TV crew or the Government, for that matter, from covering. That shows the measure of intolerance and undemocratic instances of an irresponsible political party."

Anwar was speaking to reporters after visiting stall holders at Island Glades.

In Alor Star, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff described local Pas leaders and its former deputy youth chief Mohamad Sabu as weak when they failed to prevent a group of their supporters from assaulting the crew members.

He said good leaders should be able to control their supporters and that their members would always heed advice given to them.