

Exclusive call-girl ring: Dr M pledges no cover-up

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Government would not cover up for whatever reason the police investigations into an exclusive sex-for-hire ring.

"If there is anyone involved and is guilty, then they are guilty," Dr Mahathir said when asked if he had been briefed by police on the investigation into the ring's activities.

He said what he was concerned about was that people had made all sorts of allegations merely because a person was a well-known personality.

"You go to town and hammer him out of shape and then in the end you find that he is not guilty. Even then you still won't admit.

"We want to be fair to everybody, whether poor or rich, big or small ... that does not matter."

Dr Mahathir was speaking after presenting excellent service awards to 141 staff of the Home Ministry, the Registrar of Societies and the Civil Defence Department at the Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memori-

al here.

Dr Mahathir said the Government wanted to be fair and did not want one set of action against people who were well known and another for those who were not very well known.

He added that such animosity arose because there was a feeling of envy, jealousy or hatred because these people were successful.

"Whether you are successful or not, the law must be applied equally to everyone."

Asked if the "Tan Sris" or "Datuks" who were said to be involved as clients would be stripped of their titles, Dr Mahathir said he did not know.

"There have been instances where we have stripped people of their titles. There have been instances where they have entered jail ... they entered as Tan Sri and came out as Tan Sri."

Dr Mahathir later attended a 90-minute closed door meeting with heads of Government departments, senior Home Ministry officials and senior police officers.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim, who was also present, said he had directed Kuala Lumpur CPO Datuk Ismail Che Rus to record statements or to interview those who claimed "Tan Sris" or "Datuks" were involved with the vice syndicate.

"They seem to know better than we perhaps, and I would urge them to come forward and assist the police in their investigations.

"I don't know where they heard (the involvement of Tan Sris and Datuks) from. From the way they are saying or the way they are insinuating, they know more than we in the police do."

Abdul Rahim said he urged these people, including reporters and the chairman of the Bar Council, to come forward and help the police identify who the VIPs are.

"I am a Tan Sri myself and there are so many Tan Sris in this world. If they have an association and the truth does not come out and there is no Tan Sri involved then perhaps they can file a suit against these people."