

18 FEB 1997

Mahathir-Logs

PM AWAITING REPORT ON LOG SMUGGLING IN SABAH

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is still unable to say whether the log smuggling case in Sabah is serious or not.

He said he had yet to receive reports on the matter from the police and the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) so "let us wait."

On the duplication of federal and state powers in the approval of log exports from Sabah, he said both the federal and state governments had specific jurisdictions.

"The state government has its powers and so has the federal government and if we don't have a third party to investigate the matter, we cannot know whether there is duplication in implementing any policy," he told a news conference before returning to Kuala Lumpur.

The log smuggling issue in Sabah came to light following the seizure by the state Forestry Department of 3,049 logs in Tawau on Jan 18 this year, in what was believed to be an attempt to take them out without a permit.

The matter precipitated a dispute between Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Ghapur Salleh and Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, with each claiming to have powers to approve log exports from Sabah.

Asked about his meeting with the Sabah Umno liaison body this morning, Dr Mahathir said it was to explain Umno's philosophy and struggle.

On his meeting with church leaders in Sabah, he said it was aimed at promoting understanding between the church and the government to facilitate the clarification of government policies, especially those relating to freedom to practise one's religion.

"I explained the importance of tolerance and the need to be reminded that Malaysia has a multireligious population that must be prepared to compromise," he said.

He said the church leaders reacted positively towards government policies and he described the meeting as beneficial to both parties.

-- BERNAMA

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