

Don't heed rumours, says Mahathir

50

By SHAMSUL AKMAR, WAN HAMIDI HAMID and LOURDES CHARLES

KUALALUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told Malaysians not to believe in rumours about riots involving foreign workers or fights resulting from religious conflicts.

"There are no riots. All the rumours are only lies. There are no facts (about the riots). Some people deliberately made up the story to create chaos in our country," the Prime Minister said.

He said this in response to widespread rumours about riots in the Chow Kit area in the city and impending trouble involving illegal foreigners as the Aug 15 deadline for foreign workers to renew their permits draws near.

When told about the panic-buying of foodstuff by people, Dr Mahathir said it was expected because some people were irresponsible enough to create a situation which would throw the country into chaos.

"These people are the traitors of the country.

"*Kalau boleh, saya nak tangkap diu orang ni dan bawak tengah jalan saya tibui mereka* (If possible I want to catch these people and take them to the street and beat them up)," he said.

He added that the rumours might have been spread by locals and others, especially through the Internet which he described as a modern way to also circulate poison-pen letters.

Earlier, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Nonr quashed rumours of riots involving illegal foreigners.

He warned that stern action would be taken against those sending e-mail messages or spreading rumours that illegal foreigners had bought parangs and knives in readiness to challenge the authorities on or before Aug 15.

It is learnt that e-mail messages have been circulated, claiming that illegals were stocking up parangs and

□ TURN TO PAGE TWO

Rumours of curfew in Chow Kit area untrue, say police

3 FROM PAGE ONE
knives in case the authorities raided their hiding places.

Even those surfing the Internet have come across warnings to take precautions.

City police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Kamaruddin Ali also dismissed rumours that a curfew had been imposed in the Chow Kit area.

"I want to assure the public that all is well and that everything is under control."

He added that those wanting

to clarify rumours can call 03-2020-199.

Dr Mahathir, who was speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting last night, said that those using the Internet to spread vicious lies had sparked anger in Malaysians.

"They had written as if there is going to be a war. At the moment we cannot trace them.

"It (the Internet) is the pride of the West who says that it is the right of human beings,

which in effect can create trouble in their own society."

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council had discussed the existence of a certain group which had been giving the wrong picture of Islam.

"They are doing it as if they want to pit the Muslims against the non-Muslims. Of course they are not really that successful but they are doing it, including using the Internet," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said those in-

involved in such activities included people who claimed to be preachers, lecturers and *ulamas* (religious scholars) who were not *ulamas* and who had no religious background at all but had other (academic) qualifications.

He said the lies posted on the Internet, in English, could influence many.

Giving an example, he said those people deliberately emphasised how Islamic law called for the death penalty for

certain offences.

He said Umno would explain to Malaysians the true teachings of Islam, based on the Quran and *Hadis* (prophetic traditions).

"We are thinking of setting up a monitoring unit to check on those rumours and lies on the Internet," he said, adding that state governments would be asked to enforce the existing laws to ensure only approved Muslim preachers could deliver religious ser-

mons anywhere.

On Malaysia-Singapore relations, the Prime Minister said Umno would support the government's stand and there were no plans for the party to meet Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP).

He said the supreme council, which met for almost three and a half hours, also discussed the steps taken to improve the economy and the attempts by others to foil the Government's efforts.