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PM to people: Don't listen to rumours

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight advised Malaysians to remain united and thwart attempts by unscrupulous people spreading rumours to create chaos.

"Don't listen to such baseless stories," he said, adding that he expected more such rumours to surface in the near future.

The Prime Minister said this when asked to comment on rumours that immigrants had taken up arms against the authorities, reportedly in the Chow Kit area. The rumours were rife late afternoon and tonight.

"There is no truth to these claims, some of them spread over the Internet, that foreigners have armed themselves," Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, told a Press conference after chairing the party's supreme council meeting at Menara Dato Onn.

Earlier, at a separate function, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor dismissed rumours of Indonesians stocking up on various weapons, mostly parangs, as a prelude to riots in the Klang Valley.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Datuk Kamaruddin Md Ali tonight denied the same rumour after receiving several calls saying there were disturbances in the area.

Kamaruddin said this was the work of rumour mongers. Police were trying to identify them.

Police would not hesitate to detain those involved and charge them in court, he said.

Elaborating on his comments, Dr Mahathir said: "There are elements who are out to create problems and chaos, even resorting to spread such malicious claims over the Internet. These people are traitors."

Asked who these elements were, Dr Mahathir said they were both foreigners and locals.

"We must remain united against such elements," he said.

On efforts to identify and initiate action against those abusing the Internet to create chaos, the Prime Minister said: "What can we do ... If we could do something, we would have done so.

"They use the Internet, how do we identify them?"

He added that authorities would now consider monitoring bulletin boards on the Internet but stressed that identifying the senders would not be easy.

Besides this, Dr Mahathir said there were elements who had used bulletin boards on the Net to discredit Islam and pit Muslims against non-Muslims.

Dr Mahathir cited claims of how a Muslim man turned into a pig upon death. Those responsible even professed to have wide knowledge of Islam.

"In fact these people are not who they claim to be. Are we (Muslims) that stupid or gullible to believe such rumours?" he said.

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council also discussed at length the dispute with Singapore over the relocation of the Customs, Immigrations and Quarantine checkpoint in Tanjong Pagar.

He said the supreme council had given its fullest support to the Government on its handling of the issue, including the decision not to relocate to Woodlands as demanded by Singapore.

On whether Umno would initiate a meeting to discuss the matter, Dr Mahathir said it had no such plans.

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