

Government will help Sauk victims' families, pledges Dr Mahathir

KUALA KANGSAR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in expressing the Government's appreciation for the sacrifices of the late detective sergeant R. Sagadevan, pledged that the Government would continue to help his family.

The Prime Minister said similar assistance would also be extended to Sagadevan's colleague, detective sergeant Mohd Shah Ahmad, who survived the Sauk ordeal.

Speaking to reporters after meeting members of the two families at Sungai Perak Safari Resort here, Dr Mahathir said the Government would do what it could to ease the burden of Sagadevan's family.

"We cannot bring him back. What we can do is to provide the necessary assistance.

"However, the Government wants to ensure that all contributions are properly managed for the welfare of the children," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, made a brief stopover here to express his condolences to Sagadevan's widow S. Mahiga, 40, and also to meet Mohd Shah, after a visit to Kedah this morning, where he opened the State Umno convention.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah spent about an hour with the fam-

ilies. **Nst 2 1 JUL 2001**

Also present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali and wife Datin Seri Kamariah Mokri, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, who is Kuala Kangsar MP, and Deputy Inspector-General of Police Datuk Jamil Johari.

Dr Mahathir also made personal contributions to both families, who also received contributions from Bakti (Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers) and Baiduri (Association of Wives of Perak Assemblymen) from Dr Siti Hasmah and Kamariah, respectively.

Sagadevan, 49, and Mohd Shah, 48, were among four hostages captured by the Al Ma'unah group in Sauk during a four-day standoff with security forces.

The group members earlier stole a cache of high-powered weapons from two army infantry units in Banded and Grik.

Sagadevan was allegedly brutally murdered by members of the Al Ma'unah group.

Another soldier, Mathew ak Medan, was also killed, while Mohd Shah and durian collector Jaafar Puteh, 50, escaped with injuries after being tortured by the group.

Jaafar, however, died mysteriously two days ago.