

# 'Group wanted govt out'

Al Mau'nah demanded resignation of PM and cabinet

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**PUTRAJAYA**, Mon: The Al Ma'unah members who surrendered last Thursday after a daring weapons heist at two Grik army camps five days earlier were out to topple the Government.

Calling the group "terrorists", Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said its political motive was to change the Government by toppling it by force.

"By looking at their message of asking us to resign, it means that they want to topple the government . . . but they acted stupidly

"What can they do by holding up in Sauk, without preparation or training? Some of them have not even used a gun . . . they were

armed with parangs," he told reporters.

The Umno president was speaking to reporters during a 7.30pm break in the Umno Supreme Council meeting, which began at his official here at 1.30pm.

Mahathir expressed concern about certain quarters, including PAS, for sympathising and offering support to the Al Ma'unah's cause, accusing them of white-washing the incident in which three lives, two those of security personnel, were lost.

"They are involved in politics in their own way. In fact, they asked for the prime minister and his *kuli* (servants), meaning Cabinet members, to resign. They said this during their first communication over radio with our security forces.

"Today's meeting was to discuss problems created by

PAS, but since the Sauk incident, we have taken this opportunity to explain what and why the incident actually happened," he said.

If no explanation is made by the Government, sympathisers will try to legitimise the gang's actions.

For now, Mahathir said, the people are condemning and criticising the actions of the Al Ma'unah - but it will not be long before efforts begin to legitimise the actions.

"Certain groups will start defending their actions by saying that they were frustrated with the Government for being un-Islamic, like allowing liquor to be sold in the country

"This is what sympathisers and the Sauk rebels will say, for their common aim is to strive for an Islamic state."

PAS too disagrees with the

group's way, but it will propose that the people understand why the group had to do it.

Mahathir is thankful that Umno was able to handle the incident effectively and successfully without too many casualties.

"We feel very sad that two government security forces personnel were tortured and killed but the incident could have become something much bigger if not for the army and police.

"All Umno divisions will hold a thanksgiving ceremony because the incident ended here, and as gratitude to members of our security forces," he said.

On efforts to tackle other deviant groups, Mahathir said it will have to be studied to ensure that they are dealt with in a reasonable way

Elaborating further, he

admitted that the government had been mistaken in two issues, first in making the assumption that Al Ma'unah was just another martial arts group, and the other in the carrying out of military regulations.

"We have found that there were no neat instructions given to our sentries and those in charge of the arms, so we have learnt from that," he said.

Asked to comment on the general unhappiness that the two security forces men murdered were both non-Muslims, Mahathir said that what was certain was that the government will not tolerate such things.

"But this government, Umno, does not support any such discrimination or action against any people simply because of differences in religion."