

# Govt investigating report on Ezam, says Abdullah

27 OCT 2000

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs:** The government will take action against Parti Keadilan Nasional Youth chief Ezam Mohd Nor if his smear campaign against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad overseas contravenes any law.

"If not, we will treat his statements as political," Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told a press conference after chairing an Umno disciplinary and management committee meeting yesterday.

"What is important is that Umno members must strengthen the party," he said.

"Any move by any group, be it Ezam or any other person, to sabotage our economy and try to prevent foreign investors from coming in, needs to be investigated thoroughly before any action can be taken."

He said police are investigating the matter.

*Utusan Malaysia* reported on Tuesday that Ezam had, in an assembly organised by PAS and Keadilan at Batu Tiga in Tandop, near Alor Star, admitted to condemning Mahathir overseas.

The report said Ezam also challenged the government and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar to prosecute him in any court for his action.

Ezam also reportedly said that other Keadilan leaders were involved, including its president, Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, vice-president Tian Chua, and information chief Ruslan Kassim. The others included Kuala Kedah MP Mohamad Sabu of PAS.

Abdullah said it is not right for any Malaysian citizen to condemn the country's leaders overseas.

"If you want to play with politics, then do it in the country. If the public support (you), then you will win and can establish your own government.

"Why should we condemn our leaders and beg for support from those who do not even care about what happens to our country?"

He said that by doing so "it goes to show that the person is politically weak, and thus, has to find support outside the country".

Abdullah said the government cannot ban any of its citizens from travelling overseas as the public are free to travel anywhere, except to Israel and Yugoslavia.

Several government leaders also commented on the report.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said that unless there is hard evidence which warrants a matter to be taken to court, no action will be necessary.

"The government will not act on threats or challenges made by certain parties," he told reporters after attending a Deepavali open house hosted by MIC president and Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

"The authorities will only act through lawful means where there is sufficient evidence."

In **SHAH ALAM**, Selangor Datuk Mentri Besar Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo described any attempt to smear the country's image overseas as a selfish and ungrateful act.

In **IPOH**, Mentri Besar Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali criticised the actions of opposition leaders who ran down the country's leaders overseas.

"They should just restrict their actions to the country before it turns into an economic sabotage campaign overseas, which will result in the nation being at the losing end," he told reporters after attending a Deepavali lunch hosted by state MIC chairman Datuk G. Rajoo at his residence.

In **KOTA BARU**, adviser to the Finance Ministry Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said he is confident the Opposition will fail in its attempts to smear the country's image abroad.

He said the actions of the opposition leaders will not affect the country's economic situation "because the world has recognised and accepted Malaysia's leaders and her policies".

"Most of the foreigners have been in the country for several years either as investors or counterparts in government policies," he said.

"They truly know Malaysia and, as such, they will not be influenced by any allegation spread by the Opposition."