

Dollah: No further action likely against The Sun

■ By SIM LEOI LEOI and AUDREY EDWARDS

STAR 30 DEC 2001

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government is unlikely to take further action against *The Sun* newspaper that carried a front-page report on a plot to kill Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Christmas Day.

Abdullah, who is also the Home Minister, said he had accepted the apology tendered by the English newspaper.

"But I don't think there'll be further action," he said when asked whether the Government planned to suspend or ban the newspaper.

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after handing over *duit ruyu* and schoolbags to about 200 orphans at a Hari Raya open house organised by the Malay Journalists Association here yesterday.

In the report, the paper quoted unnamed police sources as saying that an assassin had

been hired to kill the country's top two leaders.

Following the denial by the police and the two leaders that there was such a plot, the editor-in-chief of the paper H'ng Hung Yong and its editor Andy Ng tendered their resignations while managing editor Chong Cheng Hai and chief news editor Robert Ho were suspended.

Reporter R. Manirajan and photographer Anita Md Nasir, who wrote the story, were also suspended.

The Sun newspaper later ran an apology to Dr Mahathir and Abdullah on its front page.

Asked if the ministry had asked for an apology from the English daily, Abdullah said: "I don't know whether we asked for one. I have requested that Datuk Aseh Che Mat (the ministry's secretary-general) handle the matter.

"We just want to know how they got the information on the alleged plot and why they decided to run it as a banner headline. If they co-operate,

the police inquiry won't take long."

Malay Journalists Association president Yazid Othman said the domestic inquiry panel set up by *The Sun* to investigate those responsible for its report should have editorial representation.

At another event, Aseh said no action would be taken against the newspaper until investigations were completed.

"Wait for the investigation to be completed. It is not only the Home Ministry but we are waiting to hear from the police about the statements taken," he said yesterday after attending the Pengasih Malaysia Association Hari Raya celebrations at Rumah Pengasih.

He said the newspaper had been asked to submit a show-cause letter to the ministry but it had not asked the newspaper to issue an apology.



Police record ex-editor's statement - P15