

Talk to Alternative Front instead, Kit Siang tells PM

PETALING JAYA, Fri: DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang has called on Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to abandon plans for the "Umno-PAS Malay unity talks" and accept "Barisan Nasional-Alternative Front national unity talks" instead.

Lim said yesterday's statement by the prime minister has deepened nationwide concerns and raised more questions as to the appropriateness of such talks after 43 years of independence.

Mahathir said yesterday Umno is calling for unity talks with PAS because it wants to discuss issues related to Malay interests and that Malays must fight as one to defend these interests.

Lim said Mahathir had made a "grave and insensitive allegation which is not conducive" to promoting inter-racial harmony or national unity.

"If there have been challenges to the three constitutionally entrenched tenets, why has the government not arrested and charged anyone under the Sedition Act?" Lim asked.

He also said there is no proof that Islam, as a religion, is being challenged.

Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) president Dr Syed Husin Ali challenged the prime minister to declare who and which group of people are challenging the special rights of the Malays, the national language, the national religion and the status of the Malay rulers.

"Mahathir must also ex-

plain why the Barisan Nasional has failed in preventing the tenets of the federal constitution from being challenged," Syed Husin said.

He called Mahathir's statement a "desperate act to prove to himself and to Umno that he is a hero to the Malays, in an attempt to win their straying support".

"He has shifted from saying Umno will discuss anything concerning Malay unity, including Anwar Ibrahim, to saying that Umno only wants to discuss the challenges made against Malay rights," Syed Husin said.

He reiterated that "the Alternative Front fully supports the permanence of Malay rights and what has been long entrenched in the constitution".

At the same time, he said, the Front also upholds and supports the right to one's own mother tongue and religion.