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Dr Mahathir: It's news to me (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he had no knowledge of a plot to assassinate him as reported by a daily today.

The Prime Minister said the police would have informed him if there was such an attempt.

The Sun frontpaged a report today saying that the police had uncovered a plot to assassinate Dr Mahathir and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The report, which was picked up by foreign news agencies and transmitted worldwide, said the hit was supposed to be carried out in a month or two by a hitman nicknamed "Raja Commando".

The hitman was allegedly hired by several politicians who are behind the conspiracy.

Deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Jamil Johari said police had no knowledge of an attempt to assassinate Dr Mahathir and Abdullah, adding that the reporters of the English daily who wrote the story would be called to assist in investigations.

Dr Mahathir broke into laughter when reporters posed the question.

"I don't know, I have no information at all about that. Normally if there is anything serious the police will inform me. But these kind of rumours go around.

"Of course, there have been the extremist groups, (which) have indicated that that is one of their objectives. I don't think there is anything very serious about this," he told reporters at the Christmas open house organised by the Christian Federation of Malaysia (see Back Page).

Asked if the news report could threaten stability, Dr Mahathir said such reports should not be taken seriously.

"This is just a report in a newspaper. I don't know where they got their news," he said.

On whether his security would be increased, he said it was adequate.

Meanwhile, Jamil said he hoped the English daily which carried the story would co-operate with the police to assist in investigations.

"I cannot confirm the report as only the newspaper knows whether it is true or not. And besides, I have not read the report yet so I don't know whether it's genuine," he said.

However, Jamil said that news or reports like this were not only serious but also frightening.

"If this is what the newspaper has reported, then police will investigate the matter and we also seek co-operation from the reporters who filed the story."

Asked to comment on reports that security at the Prime Minister's residence and office had been increased, Jamil replied that this was a normal procedure as it involved the country's leaders.

"I request reporters to write their stories if they have strong grounds and if the stories are substantiated. If they are unsure, then they should not write the story."

Meanwhile, Parti Keadilan Nasional Shah Alam deputy division chief Raja Kamaruddin Raja Abdul Wahid, known as "Raja Komando" in local political circles, has denied any involvement.

Raja Kamaruddin, 53, said he did not know why he was implicated and would seek legal advice on what action he should take, including against the newspaper.

"I am known as `Raja Komando' and there is only one `Raja Komando', so the report clearly referred to me.

"I do not know the motive but there must be a hidden agenda behind this," he said. Raja Kamaruddin, an ex-commando, left the armed forces in 1983.