

Don't make us look so bad,

Nst - 8 JAN 2002

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed disappointment with local newspapers for giving a wrong impression on the arrest of eight university students who were caught in the Barisan Nasional's Indera Kayangan by-election operations centre for trespassing on Saturday night.

"There is slight variation between the headlines and the actual reason they were apprehended, which is unfortunately buried

at the bottom of the stories that followed.

"This gives the impression that we purposely arrested the students and that we did so without a valid reason. I appeal to the Press not to make us look so bad," he said, noting that the culprits should have known from the outset that their action was a criminal offence.

Dr Mahathir said this after delivering a keynote address at the Third Public Service Premier Function at the National Institute

of Public Administration (Intan) at Bukit Kiara here.

The students and a housewife who were held overnight by police for questioning, also tried to sabotage the BN campaign by destroying election posters.

They were released on police bail at 8.45pm yesterday.

Dr Mahathir also said a White Paper on investigations relating to the Al-Ma'unah group would be issued soon.

"We are going to proceed with it

PM tells local daïmes

now as the trial is already over. The problem before was that we might be held in contempt of court."

Dr Mahathir also expressed doubt Pas would ever be convinced that the arms heist at two military camps in Sauk, Perak by members of the group was not a "sandiwara" (play).

On Dec 27, all 19 Al-Ma'unah members, including group leader Mohd Amin Mohd Razali, were found guilty by judge Datuk Zulkefli Ahmad Makinudin and were

sentenced the following day.

Three of them Mohd Amin, Zahit Muslim and Jamaludin Darus — were sentenced to death while the others were jailed for life.

On a report in Singapore's *Berita Harian* which claimed that the Sept 11 terrorists attacks on the US could have been prevented had Malaysia arrested the two prime suspects when they visited Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said:

"They had (also) been in the US

for one month. Why didn't the US detain them?

"They were also in Switzerland, and the Swiss authorities, too, did not detain them".

A report in the daily said the two men Khalid Al-Midhar and Nawaf Al-Azmi — were in Malaysia from Aug 5 to Aug 8, 2000.

The paper had quoted *Jane's Intelligence Review*, a defence and intelligence magazine.

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PM: We will plan budget over two years

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‘He said the Government would plan its budget over two years to ensure all ministries and departments utilised their allocation on time.

“From this year, we will implement this.

“We will have one budget for actual implementation and another for identifying projects we want to undertake the following year, but for which preparations do not incur spending such as negotiations on the procurement of land,” he said.

In October last year, the Government said it would determine its expenditure two years ahead, instead of annually, to improve the

quality and efficiency of budget allocations.

Detailed examinations and reviews of the ministries’ proposals would be conducted every two years from next year, a change which is hoped would reduce the time and resources poured into preparing the budget.

Earlier, in his address to the 600 top level civil servants, Dr Mahathir said government officers should not allow their personal opinion to prevent them from carrying out instructions from their superiors.

“Our military personnel know that they must obey the instructions of the ruling government but this does not mean they are barred from giving their input altogether.

“However, if one government officer thinks that the order is wrong and begins to make his own decision, then the whole department is doomed to failure.

“There is a lot of good even in obeying orders which sound stupid. If we carry out the order with discipline as a united force, there is still a likelihood of yielding some results.”

Dr Mahathir also said that although corruption existed in the country, it was not rampant or able to jeopardise the administrative mechanism.

“In Malaysia, the majority of civil servants are not corrupt.

“The evidence is clear. The country cannot continue to be wealthy if the system is corrupt,” he added.