

PAS information officer charged with defamation

By MENG YEW CHOONG

KOTA BARU: PAS information officer Buniyamin Yaakob, 56, was charged in the Sessions Court here yesterday with defaming Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a *ceramah* by accusing the Prime Minister of having watched pornographic videotapes with his grandchildren.

Buniyamin claimed trial and hearing has been fixed for Nov 5-7.

He is alleged to have made the statement about Dr Mahathir at a *ceramah* at the Pusat Tarbiyah Islamiah Kelantan on March 15.

Buniyamin, who is ill and has been warded at the hospi-

STAR 20 SEP 2002

tal here for the past fortnight, arrived at the courthouse in an ambulance and was brought in a wheelchair into the courtroom at around 9.45am, accompanied by Kelantan PAS legal advisor Takiyuddin Hassan.

The court was packed with about 60 PAS supporters and there was a strong police presence around the courthouse.

Karpal Singh, who is Buniyamin's counsel, argued before judge Mohd Yazid Mustafa that the case should be dropped because the person who was allegedly defamed, the Prime Minister, did not himself lodge the report against Buniyamin. (The report was made by two indi-

viduals in Kedah and Kelantan).

However, Yazid held that the public prosecutor had the discretion to investigate and charge any person, and that right could not be questioned.

Deputy public prosecutor Azmi Ariffin appeared together with two officials from the Attorney-General Chambers, Nordin Hassan and Dzulkifli Ahmad.

Buniyamin, who is charged under Section 500 of the Penal Code, went back to hospital after he was released on a bail of RM7,000 in one surety. If convicted, he can be jailed for up to two years, or fined, or both.