

22 OCT 2002

Mahathir-Gunaratna

DR MAHATHIR HITS OUT AT AUTHOR OF BOOK LINKING BN TO AL-QAEDA

SUBANG, Oct 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has described Dr Rohan Gunaratna, the author of the book, "Inside Al-Qaeda -- Global Network of Terror" which allegedly claims that the Barisan Nasional (BN) has links with the Al-Qaeda terrorist network as someone "who does all the damages."

"They are stupid. They don't know anything. They know how to write only to be patted in the back by the West. He...`kaki ampu'(flatterer)," he told reporters on his return after a visit to India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) Base here late last night.

Dr Mahathir said he had no respect at all for such people.

On Gunaratna's contention that the claims were based on information from the Philippine intelligence, Dr Mahathir said, "Even if is the Philippine intelligence, doesn't mean it must be true.

"We also hear many stories. In Malaysia, there are many stories about me being a `Firaun' (Pharoah) and so on."

Asked whether there is a sinister motive behind the book, Dr Mahathir said flatterers never learnt, especially Asians who craved for praises.

"All Asians, Asians like to be praised, patted on the back a bit, they will sell even their own country," he said.

On the possibility of the government suing the author, Dr Mahathir said that since the writer is outside Malaysia, even if the government were to sue him, it would probably not see justice.

As to whether the book should be banned here, Dr Mahathir said, "I don't know whether we should ban the book or not. I don't believe in banning books.

"But if he comes to Malaysia and we have a case against him, he will be bring him before the court, if we have a case," he said.

The interest in the book was generated by a United Nations monitoring group report to the UN Security Council, listing the BN to the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. The allegation was reportedly taken from a chart in Gunaratna's book.

-- BERNAMA

MSL MAM ABG