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Osama link in Fernandez killing (HL)

Firdaus Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The assassination of Lunas state assemblyman Dr Joe Fernandez and the attack on the Guar Chempedak police station last year was the work of those aligned with Osama bin Laden, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said police investigations showed that members of a "cell" of the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia carried out these attacks with the ultimate aim of overthrowing the Government.

He said the revelations follow police interrogation of a robber detained after the botched Southern Bank robbery in Petaling Jaya last year.

"One of the robbers was interrogated and from this source we learned that the assassination and the attack on Guar Chempedak police station were carried out by the same group," Dr Mahathir said.

He said police then identified the rest of the gang members and have since detained them under the Internal Security Act.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to the media after launching the Malay Chamber of Commerce's Dewan Muda wing at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Asked if the criminals would be charged in court, he said that if sufficient evidence could be adduced then they would be charged.

"Where they are involved in definite crimes, like the murder of the state assemblyman, and if we can find enough proof, we will try them but the ISA as you know is a preventive law."

Dr Mahathir said those detained under the ISA had admitted being trained in Afghanistan by the Taliban and by Osama's group..

The authorities had yet to conclude investigations into the extent of terrorist activities in the country.

"But as far as we are concerned their intentions are very bad, namely to create trouble and to overthrow the Government through terrorism," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the group's chain of command, via the cell system, was similar to that of communist terrorists who posed a threat to the country years ago.

On the continuous allegation of Pas that the Sauk arms heist was a sandiwara, Dr Mahathir said the opposition party had lost its sense of justification.

"They know what they are saying is not true but for the sake of ridiculing the Government they will continue to deny the truth. For them everything is a sandiwara and conspiracy," he said, adding that their leaders even lied and mis-interpreted the Quran.

The Prime Minister also criticised Parti Keadilan Nasional for its "crude" campaign tactics at the Indera Kayangan by-election.  
firidy@nstp.com.my

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