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Police to probe Hadi's presence at Makassar meeting

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LANGKAWI, Sat. - The authorities will investigate Pas acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang's attendance at a meeting of Islamic radicals in Makassar, Sulawesi, in October 2000 to determine whether the party has links with militancy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Opposition was acting as if they were "privileged" or immune to action when they commit offences.

"He (Hadi) is opposition and opposition is 'privileged'," said Dr Mahathir today after inspecting the progress in further developing the Gunung Machinchang Cable car project here today.

"Even if he breaks the law, it is still okay, but for government people, the slightest mistake made means we have to be taken to court."

Umno Youth has called for an investigation into Hadi's attendance, and how this is being seen as an "endorsement" by Pas.

"We will investigate ... we know that many members of (local) militant groups consist of Pas members.

"I hope he (Hadi) has no connection with the criminal activities conducted by some of the people there," said Dr Mahathir.

In Seremban, Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said police were gathering information on the Makassar meeting by liaising with their counterparts in Jakarta.

"We are trying to establish what it (the meeting) was about and who were present," Norian said at the Nilai Spring and Golf Course today.

A report published in a local English daily named Hadi, who is Terengganu Menteri Besar, as the leader who made the acquaintance of a group of Islamic radicals at Makassar, Sulawesi.

Radical Islamic leaders like Jemaah Islamiah leader Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Agus Dwikarna, head of the militant Laskar Jundullah (Army of Allah) were present at the meeting.