

Mahathir given 7 days to name those he met
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Karpal Singh became today the second DAP top leader after party advisor Lim Kit Siang to challenge claims by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he had met opposition leaders in 1987 and assured them they would not be placed under arrested.

Karpal, who is DAP national chairperson and member of parliament for Bukit Gelugor, said Mahathir's stand to that effect was "far away from the truth" and challenged the latter to name the opposition leaders that he met as well as the time and venue of the purported meeting.

"I state, with all the force at my command, that there was no such meeting," said the veteran lawyer and politician, who was detained during 'Operation Lalang' under the Internal Security Act from late 1987 to early 1989.

"If Dr Mahathir does not respond to my challenge to him within seven days, it must be presumed that Dr Mahathir is not telling the truth... It is a very serious matter for a former prime minister to publicly lie," Karpal added.

In the latest book on Mahathir by American journalist Tom Plate, the former premier was quoted as saying that he had actually met with opposition leaders to guarantee them they would not be prosecuted.

Mahathir told Plate that he had actually preferred to "handle it differently", but that the police had insisted on the arrests.

DAP supremo Lim had said four days ago: "I never met Mahathir and he never gave me any assurance that I would not be arrested before the launch of Operasi Lalang on Oct 27, 1987... let Mahathir name the opposition leaders he had met!"

In his statement today, Karpal said Mahathir's claim that it was the police who caused the detention of 106 people during Operation Lalang could not be true as it was Mahathir himself who signed the detention orders after the recommendations were made to him by the police following investigations.

"The police could not have forced Dr Mahathir to sign the detention orders at gun-point. Dr Mahathir. Dr Mahathir was then also Minister of Home Affairs and the police were directly under his charge, and not the other way around," Karpal pointed out.

Furthermore, Karpal noted that following his release from ISA detention following his habeas corpus application on March 9, 1988, it was Mahathir himself who ordered his re-arrest and on April 16, 1988 signed the detention order for Karpal under the ISA.

As for former inspector-general of police Hanif Omar who backed Mahathir's claim that it was the police behind the detentions and not the then-premier, Karpal said this was "equally untruthful".

"Tun Hanif should not add credence to Dr Mahathir's preposterous claim, nearly 24 years after Operation Lalang when, clearly, Dr Mahathir is not telling the truth.

"It is a shame that Tun Hanif should throw his dignity and self-respect to the winds just to please his former master who was responsible for his Tunship and heading Genting after his retirement," said Karpal in reference to Hanif's honorary title and the multi-million ringgit gaming corporation of which Hanif was made a director.

Mahathir, however, yesterday reiterated his stand on his meeting with opposition leaders prior to Operation Lallang and accused DAP leaders, instead, of lying.

"They are lying. I have no reason to make that claim unless it had happened.

"But I don't expect the opposition leaders to be grateful of what the government has done especially if it came from me," he told journalists.

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