

Mahathir: I've yet to read Eminent 25 letter
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad today revealed he has not read the open letter signed by 25 eminent Malays urging Prime Minister Najib Razak to show leadership in curbing extremism.

"I haven't read the letter yet. It is not in the papers. I don't know who's behind them and what's the content (of the letter)," he said at a press conference at the Nusantara Malay youth leadership convention in Kuala Lumpur.

When told that there were quarters who believe that he may be behind the group, he shot back: "Everybody accuses me of everything."

Yesterday, his activist daughter Marina, when asked if Mahathir supported the letter, had expressed hope that her father would do so.

In a strongly-worded letter to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, 25 former civil servants and luminaries - dubbed Eminent 25 - called on him to speak up in the face of extremism.

Most of the members of the group were top civil servants who had served under Mahathir.

However, Perkasa, of which Mahathir is patron, had slammed the Eminent 25, with its president Ibrahim Ali claiming that the rightwing group had even "greater eminent Malays who number in the hundreds".

Meanwhile, on Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's statement that non-Muslims in the state can use the word 'Allah', Mahathir said Lim simply wanted to depict himself as a "liberal".

"This is a political issue done by Lim to show that he is liberal and that all government leaders, especially Muslim government leaders, are not liberal."

Conceding that the Allah issue had cropped up during his tenure as prime minister, Mahathir said although indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak can continue using the word 'Allah', there was no necessity for them to use the word in other places where it has never been used before.

"I don't believe that the word 'Allah' is the name of God for the Christians, they never used it until the coming of Islam.

"Missionaries in Indonesia and Malaysia use the word 'Allah' as God to convince Muslims that Christianity is the same religion as Islam," he said.

'I'm echoing their dissatisfaction'

Lim on Thursday had said that the Penang government would not repeal Section 5 of the Syariah Criminal Enactment for Penang or any other enactments, as they are not binding on non-Muslims.

"Even the Administration of the Religion of Islam (State of Penang) Enactment 2004 bears me out where Section 49(1) of the enactment states that a fatwa shall be binding on every Muslim in the state..., without mentioning non-Muslims, clearly restricting its application on Muslims," he said in response to MCA urging him to repeal the enactment.

Meanwhile, when asked to comment on the police report lodged by Batu Kawan Umno division vice-chairperson Khairuddin Abu Hassan against 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and Pusat Bandar Taman Cempaka Umno branch leader Syed Rosli Jamalullail who wrote an open letter to Najib demanding the Umno president to quit before the next election, Mahathir said there were already a number of those in Umno who are dissatisfied with Najib.

"They (those who are dissatisfied) already have their own opinions. What I have voiced out so far is based on information of their dissatisfaction.

"Previously, they did not want to voice their dissatisfaction openly. But because I have voiced out their opinion, they seemed braver to state them openly now."

Mahathir himself had openly criticised 1MDB and reprimanded Najib over a number of his policies.