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Counter-attack is the only option, says Dr Mahathir

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BAGAN SERAI: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said there was no other way for the government to deal with the stand-off in Lahat Datu, except to launch a counter-attack.

The former prime minister said the matter could no longer be settled through negotiation since the offer for the intruders from southern Philippines to surrender was not appreciated.

"The government needs to take stern action since it has already taken a bloody turn which killed our people.

"I don't think there is any other way to deal with this, except for the

government to launch a counter-attack so that we can wipe out the intruders once and for all.

"Even if it means more intruders will be killed, it is unavoidable because they started the attack on Sabah first, not us.

"We have been careful," he told reporters after a gathering with the people here.

More than 15,000 people attended the gathering organised by Perkasa. Present was its president, Datuk Ibrahim Ali.

To a question that an opposition leader may have a hand in the stand-off as reported in a foreign news-

paper, Dr Mahathir said the leader had been playing the role of "instigator" in Sabah.

"He has been promising a lot of things to Sabah in order to get support. He told them that they would get 20 per cent royalty for the oil.

"So, all these things stir up feelings and this is dangerous because it may result in a civil war in the country."

Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal said every citizen should defend their home soil from intruders.

"I have full confidence in our security forces but at the same time,

we can assist them if we know of any threats," he said yesterday.

"Villagers, for instance, would have better knowledge of their surroundings or if you see something suspicious, you can inform the authorities," Shafie said when addressing residents of some 10 villages who attended the opening of the Lihak-Lihak bridge and road here.

Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said the authorities should investigate claims that a top opposition leader had a hand in the Lahad Datu incident.

"If such claims are proven to be true, the government should no

longer compromise but bring them to justice," he said.

Some 100 members from several non-governmental organisations staged a peaceful demonstration here, urging police to probe the involvement of opposition leaders in the incident.

Pahang Perkasa chief Muhammad Faiz Hashim said those responsible should face action.

"If this is true, then the opposition has gone overboard.

"Previously, they caused tension by touching on the use of the word 'Allah' and now, they are putting the country in danger."