

Words, actions deemed insulting need to be defined, says Dr M

NOT-11/1/2019 Pg. 4

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the actions or words that can constitute as insult to the monarchy will need to be clearly defined.

This, he said, is necessary so that there is no confusion in future when enforcing the law.

Commenting on the recent arrests of three people under the Sedition Act 1948 for insulting the monarchy, Dr Mahathir said the authorities are unclear on

what can be defined as an insult.

“Right now, the authorities do not understand what is tantamount to an insult, so we have to spell out the actions or words that can be construed as insulting,” he said after chairing a meeting of the Special Cabinet Committee on Anti-Corruption.

Malaysia, he said, upholds freedom of speech, where those who speak the facts cannot be faulted.

“On the contrary, if we prohibit

everyone from speaking, so much so that they do not even report when a crime occurs, there will be injustice in our country.”

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said the government would properly define what constituted as sedition when it proposes new laws to protect the sanctity of the royal institution.

“If someone says something which is the truth, and there is no doubt in it, we can voice it out.

And it will not be considered as sedition. We need to define ‘sedition’. we will tell you what you can say and what you cannot say.

“If you say something that tarnishes (a person), it is not a good thing. It is the same with everyone. It is up to the rulers. “For instance, in the past, I was called *Maha Firaun* (the great Pharaoh), but I did not take any action.

“Maybe I was a *firaun*,” Dr Mahathir said in jest.

He said people who told the truth will not be defined as uttering seditious words.

“We try to explain what can be said and what cannot be said. I have already explained what sedition doesn’t mean. It’s not seditious if you say something truthful. But if you go and curse people, then not only the ruler (has a right to take action), but an ordinary person will also have the right to sue you,” he said.