

It's just a coincidence, says Tun M

KUALA LUMPUR: It was just a coincidence that various initiatives for Tanjung Piai were announced so close to the by-election for the constituency, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He refuted allegations that it was an attempt to buy votes.

"Before the nomination, we (government) were just doing our task as usual and the recent announcements of allocations for Tanjung Piai were just a coincidence," he told a media conference at Parliament lobby.

He was referring to the installation of 264

street lamps in the rural areas of Tanjung Piai at a cost of RM127,776, grants worth RM230,000 for village chiefs, RM4 million to improve sports facilities and RM3 million to upgrade jetties for fishermen.

"If announcing allocations during a by-election campaign is an offence, the government would not use these pre-planned initiatives to bait voters," he added.

On Monday, Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakub accused the government of abusing its position ahead of the polls, citing a series of announcements of

allocations that, he alleged, reeked of vote-buying.

Ismail Sabri said the government had more than a year to make the allocations, but chose to announce them just before the by-election.

Last week, Bersih 2.0 took Pakatan Harapan (PH) to task for announcing federal projects and allocations close to the by-election. The election watchdog group urged PH to bar federal ministers from visiting Tanjung Piai. - by **Ashwin Kumar and Amar Shah Mohsen**