

Anwar: PM unpopular for taking tough stand

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By Harpajon Singh

KUALA NERANG, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has lost popularity among certain sectors due to his tough stand over the co-operative crisis, Umno Youth leader Anwar Ibrahim said today.

"Many people are unhappy with him because he acted against the 24 co-operatives. But such qualities are vital in a leader like the Prime Minister ... he acted without fear or favour in the interest of the nation.

"Dr Mahathir has taken a tough stand on the matter in order to uphold justice and truth, although it resulted in a lot of criticism from certain sectors who were displeased with his actions," Encik Anwar told about 500 Umno members while launching the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Kampung Baru Seladang Rebah Umno branch here today.

The Education Minister said that certain quarters had also blamed Dr Mahathir for the economic slowdown which saw the freezing of certain development projects under the Fifth Malaysia Plan.

"Dr Mahathir cannot be blamed if the prices of our commodities — like tin ore, rubber and palm oil — deteriorated because even Indonesia, Thailand and Burma suffered similar consequences.

"The recession has affected the whole world and is not the doing of the Prime Minister. The prices of our commodities have improved over the past two months, but surprisingly no one has credited the Prime Minister for it.

"Some sectors are angry because they have not re-

ceived any contracts or benefits," he added.

Encik Anwar said Dr Mahathir had not frozen any development programmes in the rural sector despite the country's poor financial position.

"This shows that he is concerned for the Malays who make up a major portion of rural folk.

"While everything else was being put off due to shortage of funds, the Prime Minister still called for the implementation of water supply programmes in rural areas, costing \$1 billion.

"His explanation was that rural folk must be helped since they had given the Barisan Nasional Government the mandate to rule and strive for their future."

He added that education projects were frozen in urban areas but allocations

were still being provided to give the rural areas better facilities.

Encik Anwar said the Malays needed leaders like Dr Mahathir who were dedicated and could serve them efficiently in improving their living standards.

"We do not need leaders and professionals who only visit the rural poor during the general election and party elections.

"The plight of the rural people cannot be ignored and we must select leaders who place party interests above personal ambitions."

Encik Anwar said there were many intellectuals in Kuala Lumpur who were learned but had no interest in striving for the poor. If such personalities were picked as leaders, he warned, the Malays would suffer.