

Anwar's loyalty to

IT is nice to hear Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim reiterating publicly and in front of Malaysian students in the United States that he considers Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad his "mentor, leader and father in politics" and that the latter's leadership is still needed.

I am not doubting the Deputy Prime Minister's loyalty to his boss. Even without him making the pledge, I am always convinced of his loyalty and support for the Prime Minister and Umno president.

The problem is not with Datuk Seri Anwar. I don't think he can and will become *kacang lupakan kulit*.

The problem is with the people who count themselves as his supporters and think they know better about what is good and bad for him.

If there is talk of a rift between Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Anwar or that the latter will challenge his mentor, it will find credibility with these people.

At one point, they even condemned the description of Datuk Seri Anwar as Dr Mahathir's "adopted son" in politics.

Their objection to this symbiotic relationship was

particularly vehement when Dr Mahathir recalled the treachery of Brutus against Julius Caesar in his presidential address at last year's party general assembly.

Counting myself lucky for being among the journalists present at the occasion when the relationship between Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Anwar was sealed under the Umno banner on March 29, 1982, and having followed the latter's steady rise in the last 13 years, I have not the slightest doubt that the partnership is genuine and healthy.

Datuk Seri Anwar wasn't showing off or overstating his rapport with Dr Mahathir when he told students at George Washington University in the US capital that he met the Prime Minister regularly to discuss issues and while they might have differing opinions on certain issues, he hastened to add that he continued to look upon Dr Mahathir as his mentor, leader and father in politics.

There are two main reasons why Datuk Seri Anwar's explanation to the students is important.

Firstly, the talk that Dr Mahathir had lost his grip on power in the wake of the

recently-concluded Umno divisional elections had reached our students abroad.

Secondly, the talk of a rift between Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Anwar, and that the latter was ready to take over as Prime Minister, had also been spread to our students abroad by some irresponsible people.

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TUESDAY'S decision by the Attorney-General, Datuk Mohtar Abdullah, in ordering a judicial inquiry into the death of an air-condition mechanic in a police lock-up in Jalan Ipoh on May 12 is best seen not from the point of view of his dissatisfaction with the police but rather from the point of view of his deep desire to see that justice is done.

Although Mohtar made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the police for failing to identify the person or persons responsible for the death of Lee Quat Leong, 42, his main concern was to "establish the identity of the perpetrators and clear all doubts in connection with this case".

One can understand Mohtar's frustration. As he stated in his Press statement, the police investigation cast

OTHER

By A. Kadir

serious and grave suspicion on certain officers over Lee's death.

Mohtar indicated that he had made sure from the start of the investigation that the police officers knew exactly what they were supposed to do.

"Throughout this period, my officers in the prosecution division have had several meetings with the police over this matter to ensure compliance with the directions given earlier.

"However, the investigation as conducted by the police was not entirely according to the directions and has failed to shed any light at all on the issues raised by my Chambers," he said.

Lee, who was picked up on suspicion of involvement in the multi-million-ringgit break-in at the Mayban Finance branch office at Taman Cheras on April 27, was found dead at the police remand centre in Jalan Ipoh.

Police had initially classified the case as "sudden death", but Inspector-Gen-

Dr Mahathir
Mohamad

15 OCT 1995

Dr M not in doubt



eral of Police Tan Sri Rahim Nor said on May 25 that a thorough probe into the case would be carried out after it was reclassified as murder.

While Mohtar's decision to order a judicial inquiry does not speak favourably of the police team responsible for investigating Lee's death, it will help to relieve the police of the burden of doubt and suspicion.

This is in recognition of the fact that our 80,000-strong police force is still one of the world's best. We do not want its credibility and efficiency destroyed by a few rotten apples.

From now on, it is the court that will identify the person or persons responsible for Lee's death. The police officers involved in investigating his death will be giving evidence under oath and they know too well the penalty for perjury.

Mohtar's firm decision to hold a judicial inquiry should send a clear signal to the police that while the country's criminal justice system delegates the power to investigate such a case solely and exclusively to them, the route to justice does not end with them.

In the much wider perspective, Mohtar's decision reassures us that in our system of power sharing, the tyranny of power by any party, official or private, will not be allowed to take root.

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THE notion that development and industrialisation cause pollution and environmental degradation, although widespread, is not totally accurate. On the contrary, well-planned development and industrialisation that take nature into consideration are less detrimental to the environment than the lack of development.

This is the message repeated by Dr Mahathir when he opened the international conference on wetlands and development in Subang on Monday. He said when people are poor, pollution is more extensive.

Unable to pay for waste disposal or to dispose of it with care for the environment, the poor just throw

their waste around them, resulting in pollution and destruction, he added.

The Prime Minister contended that poverty is the biggest cause of pollution and those who impoverish the people are directly guilty of polluting the environment.

For that Dr Mahathir wants non-governmental organisations to accept the fact that nothing damages the environment more than poverty.

Said the Prime Minister: "Huge forests have been totally decimated because the only fuel the poor can afford is wood. The small environmental sacrifice which has to be made in order to develop is far less than the damage due to unmitigated poverty."

It is a well-documented fact that poor people around the globe have decimated lush forests, eventually turning them into sterile land and deserts through over-exploitation.

We went through this phase ourselves in the 1960s and 1970s when millions of hectares of jungle were cut down to resettle poor and landless farmers.

Through deliberate policy and judicious application of our natural resources, we have been able to industrialise. Today, we no longer need to open up vast tracts of forest for land settlements.

On the contrary, the land schemes created in the 1960s and 1970s are being abandoned as settlers and their children find working in the industrial and service sectors more rewarding.

In a recent leisurely drive through the tranquil hinterland of Negri Sembilan, I found that much of the padi land along the Kuala Pilah road had been abandoned and had been taken over by *belukar* (secondary forest).

Of course, this is a waste of valuable economic resource. For generations these fertile valleys had produced rice and other food crops. But with the changing economic structure and lifestyle, farming is no longer rewarding.

While we may take pleasure in seeing trees and forest taking over the farm land, the economic implications may not be as positive. Already we are becoming increasingly dependent on imported food whose supply and demand are subjected

to the vagaries of global climate and trading pattern.