

PM: Cook should have asked **me**³⁷

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By HONG BOON HOW

KUALA LUMPUR: British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook should have asked for former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to be given a fair trial when he was in Malaysia early this week, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Well, when he (Cook) was here, he never asked me anything or he would have heard everything from the horse's mouth," the Prime Minister said at a press conference yesterday.

Cook, who had raised the issue in talks with Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the United Nations, also asked that Anwar be granted access to his lawyers.

Replying to questions raised by the foreign media, Dr Mahathir said the foreign media had the opinion that fair trials were not practised in Asian countries.

"You can report all over the world that a fair trial can only

be held in European countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who had over the last few days revealed instances of Anwar's alleged sexual misconduct including homosexual relations, said he believed that the majority of the people were convinced of Anwar's guilt.

However, he said Anwar, who was sacked on Sept 2 and detained on Sunday, appeared to have pre-empted this by claiming that he would not have a fair trial.

"If he is found guilty he can tell everybody that he has not been given a fair trial," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Anwar was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) because he had incited his supporters to riot and cause disturbances.

"These demonstrations will go on as this man (Anwar) does not want to be tried (for sexual misconduct). He wants to create riot situations so the authorities cannot try him in open court," he said.

Dr Mahathir said every country had its own kind of internal security laws, adding even Britain had its Prevention of Terrorism Act under which seven or eight of the alleged terrorist Osama Ben Laden's followers had been detained without trial.

He said Anwar had left enough taped messages and interviews to incite his followers to continue causing disturbances although he had been detained.

When asked later by the foreign media how Anwar's supporters could continue to receive instructions to demonstrate in Anwar's absence, Dr Mahathir replied sarcastically:

"I am surprised about that too. I think he uses mental telepathy."

Responding to a reporter's statement that in many countries, even if one was arrested under the (prevention and terrorism act), he could still be seen, Dr Mahathir said:

"Anwar is in Malaysia and just because you don't see him,

it doesn't mean he has disappeared... poof!"

Dr Mahathir said he had been "naive" about his deputy in the beginning.

"All this time when he was my deputy, he was doing all these things without my knowledge and he managed to hoodwink the nation. pretending to be religious.

"Now that he has been discovered, I am grateful that I still had the time to dismiss him.

"If he becomes the prime minister. God help this country," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar was in good health and would be granted access to his lawyers when "the time comes."

Dismissing the allegation by Anwar that RMBil had been siphoned off and taken to Switzerland, he said:

"Think for yourself. You take a bagload of money to Switzerland and put it in a seat next to you, as alleged by Anwar.

"He (Anwar) told me that

there was a huge parcel full of money and the money was put next to Daim (Umno Treasurer and Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin) and Daim had told the pilot that he had a lot of money with him.

"The pilot later reported the money to the central bank and the central bank reported the money to Anwar and then Anwar reported it to me."

"People like Tun Daim know how easy it is to transfer a lot of money by writing on a few pieces of paper and not carry RMBil in cash. And he has his own plane so why should he use a commercial plane?"

"Only gullible foreigners will believe this. Anwar is the biggest liar," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that only a small group of people still refused to believe that Anwar had committed sexual misconduct, adding that the only group that he could never convince was the foreign media.

Asked about the illegal assembly by Anwar's supporters

at the National Mosque after Friday prayers today, the second in a week, Dr Mahathir said he was sad that there were people who supported those who "commit sin in the mosque".

"Actually they should not do that. They demonstrate in the mosque, adding to their sin and they believe those who told lies," he said.

Earlier, when opening the Malaysia Franchise Exhibition and Conference 1998 at Putra World Trade Centre here, Dr Mahathir said local businessmen could easily plan their budget now that the ringgit's value had been stabilised.

He also urged more bumiputra entrepreneurs to venture into the franchising business because their management system had already been set up by the main franchise company.

"Even those who do not have much knowledge in business can be successful franchise holders," he said.