

WHY THE SWIFT ACTION

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By WAN HAMIDIHAMID

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he had to act swiftly against his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to avoid having an immoral leader as his successor should anything happen to him.

"I had to act quickly because if anything were to happen to me, he would not be able to succeed me," he said when launching Wo-

men's Day celebrations organised by Wanita Umno at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

The Prime Minister and Umno president said he was aware that many party members thought the allegations against Anwar were baseless.

"I did not believe them in the beginning although (former Inspector-General of Police) Tun Hanif Omar reported to me in 1993 about his (sexual) inclinations.

"I dismissed it then but when I had concrete proof, I could not afford to ignore it. I had to act," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a homosexual leader could not lead a country like Malaysia because he would be tempted to follow his lust, which could be manipulated by foreign powers.

He said such a leader could be easily used by foreigners who would tempt him with "attractions", enabling them to control him.

"With such a leader, our country will lose its independence. I want Malaysians, especially the women, to know this because women play a very important role in the country," he said.

Anwar was sacked as De-

puty Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2 and expelled from Umno the next day.

After leading an illegal procession from the National Mosque here on Sunday, he was arrested by police and detained under the Internal Security Act for inciting rioting and threatening national security.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians, especially the Malays and Muslims, should distance themselves from perverted Western ideas such as accepting homosexuality as part of human rights.

He said people in the United States and Europe were proudly marching to show off their sexual preferences on the streets without any shame.

"We should not accept such things. It is detrimental to us. God will punish us. This is the promise He made in the Quran.

"It is so disgusting to see a man hugging and kissing another man in public. So nauseating," he said.

The Prime Minister said that since homosexuality was a sacred human right in the West, the foreign media in

their reporting thought of such practice as something normal.

He said for the foreign media, even if Anwar was proven to be a homosexual, it would be all right for them.

"For example, in the US, a survey found that 60% of respondents said it was all right for President Bill Clinton to have a sexual affair with Monica Lewinsky, even after he admitted to it.

"But in our country, we cannot accept such a person (to be the leader of the country)."

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Dr Mahathir said the Umno supreme council, who also found Anwar unfit to become a party member, decided to sack him.

"However, we are disappointed that even with the supreme council's decision, there are still those who are confused and suspicious of the decision.

"Surely the supreme council would not take such a serious and extreme decision without any valid reasons.

"We will continue to explain but we accept the fact that some are still unsure of the situation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the best way to find out the truth was to let Anwar be tried in an open court so that all doubts would be cleared.

The Prime Minister called on the women of Malaysia, particularly Wanita Umno, to play a proper role in shaping the minds of the people.

"Does Wanita Umno want to accept a person with bad behaviour to lead Umno? I cannot accept such a leader who is acting against the Ma-

lays and Islam," he said.

He added that Umno would be split if its women's wing failed to close ranks, and this would open the floodgates to foreign (economic and political) invasion.

Dr Mahathir said moderation was the key in the women's struggle in the country because extremism would not help in upgrading the rights of women in the country.

He cited examples of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban's poor treatment of women and the over-emphasis of equal rights between men and women in the West which created problems of differentiation between the two sexes.

Anwar was implicated in at least two sexual offences when two men confessed in court last Saturday that they had allowed themselves to be sodomised by the ex-DPM, an offence under Section 377D of the Penal Code.

Dr Mahathir said Umno members should

think deeply about the problems that had hit the country.

"If we get carried away by foreign media propaganda, Umno may be divided," he said.

Dr Mahathir said even in the past there were moves by certain parties to split Umno, adding that the attempts were prompted by self-

ish motives.

He said the foreign media's doctoring of reports of last Sunday's disturbances here by Anwar's supporters was to give the impression that the former DPM had large support.

He added that only a handful of Umno members supported Anwar and those who did, be-

lieved that he (Anwar) had been victimised.

"But many, including Anwar's own friends; no longer hold that belief upon being enlightened on his sacking," he said.

Dr Mahathir said by inciting the people to riot Anwar was trying to protect himself from facing trial in an open court.

"He thought that if President Suharto could be toppled through rioting, this too could be done in Malaysia."

"This is the aim of the riots. To avoid trial for the allegations against him because an open trial will expose all his misdemeanours and the people will lose trust in him," he said.