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PM: I did not believe allegations earlier

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated that he did not act against Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim when told of his sexual misconduct five years ago because he did not believe them.

Dr Mahathir was specifically referring to former Inspector General of Police Tun Hanif Omar, who told him about the misconduct of his former deputy.

The Prime Minister was asked by a foreign journalist why he did not pursue the matter immediately, suggesting that taking action now smacked of political manoeuvring.

The Prime Minister had earlier launched the Malaysia Franchise Exhibition and Conference '98.

Dr Mahathir said: "I just couldn't believe he (Anwar) was capable of doing that at that time, but later on I found evidence which I cannot (dismiss) ... so I have to accept the fact that he has been indulging in these kind of practice which a good Muslim shouldn't."

On Wednesday, Hanif said he informed Dr Mahathir in 1993 that Anwar had homosexual tendencies based on "convincing evidence" gathered by his officers.

"Now I have found evidence that I cannot dispute," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister was also asked to comment on the demonstration staged by Anwar's supporters at the National Mosque after Friday prayers today.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar's supporters were committing sin by using mosques to demonstrate for his sacked deputy.

He said Anwar was dismissed for sexual misconduct and therefore, by going to the mosque to demonstrate for Anwar, his supporters were also committing sin.

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

He was also asked by a foreign reporter that the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, at the United Nations yesterday, had met with Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and had reportedly expressed concern about Anwar's case.

To this, Dr Mahathir said Cook was here (with Queen Elizabeth's entourage) but it was strange Cook never asked him (Dr Mahathir) "about anything".

Dr Mahathir said the foreign Press seemed to think that fair trials could only be found in European countries and not Asian countries like Malaysia.

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