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PM: Anwar a nice, smiling man who was plotting against me

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as a nice, smiling man who was plotting against him.

However, he said the action against his former deputy, who was sacked on Sept 2, was not political and not out of fear of Anwar being too much of a challenge to him.

Dr Mahathir said this in reply to a question at a Press conference on whether the action had anything to do with Anwar mounting a strong challenge for the leadership.

"What is there? I am going to retire and I have already named him as my successor. But he did in fact plan to overthrow me, by making accusations, which he has since admitted. Although at that time he was very nice to me ... smiling, at the same time he was plotting.

"I knew about it but I chose to ignore it because to me it is quite irrelevant. If he is chosen by the party as a leader, okay, he is welcome to it. If he thinks he can challenge me, I can contest against him. I have contested against others and I have a reasonable chance to win," the Prime Minister said.

Asked whether he will remain Prime Minister for a much longer period now that he does not have a deputy, he said: "I hope not for too long. I must have a man who is capable of carrying on, a man who is trustworthy and honourable.

"I could have found some other reasons to get rid of him (Anwar) if it is political."

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, was also asked whether the police were violent or heavy handed when they arrested Anwar's supporters who demonstrated yesterday.

"I don't think they were violent. If you look at what happened in Los Angeles (during the racial riots in 1992), they are much more violent.

"Actually, when you are dealing with an unruly crowd, a certain amount of force has to be used. I would like to ask other policemen or anybody who feels like they want to carry out the job of a policemen to try and arrest violent people.

"Invariably, a certain degree of violence has to be used. But I think it was minimal. Nobody was hurt. Even Anwar, when he was arrested, was given every chance to come in peacefully. He was not treated like in certain countries where they are put in chains, hands and legs. But in this country, he was not even handcuffed. He was taken away just like that."

He added that foreigners including Indonesians, Pakistanis and an Afghan were among those arrested by police.

Asked whether the so-called reformation movement initiated by Anwar would take off, he said the movement was just to cover up Anwar's sexual misdeeds.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the situation in the country to which he replied that it was still stable.

"The majority of people in this country do not want to have these kinds of activities in Malaysia. And these things that Anwar has done is something that he has done before. He is very fond of using students in order to propagate his own fight."

Asked whether a state of emergency would be declared, Dr Mahathir said there was no need to.

"There is no state of emergency. Sure there are a few thousands of people following him, but the vast majority of 22 million people living in this country are quite happy as they are.

"As you can see, despite the demonstration on Sunday, last night there were thousands of people at the stadium. They were quite happy singing the national anthem."

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