

Right thing to do, says Ghafar

NS 1 9 JUN 1999

FORMER Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba said it was only right for Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to frankly state that there was never a conspiracy to topple Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I think the Prime Minister has to be frank and outspoken on this issue as it has been the talk among many people who assume there is such a conspiracy," he said when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's policy address.

He said if this matter was not straightened out it could probably lead to an erosion of support for Umno and the Government in the next general election.

Dr Mahathir's entire speech was very relevant to

the general election, Ghafar said.

"I am convinced now that the Barisan Nasional led by Umno will emerge even stronger and score a bigger victory than in the previous general election," he said.

Another former deputy president Tan Sri Musa Hitam described the speech as a "call to arms" aimed at party members in view of the coming general election.

"I believe the content of the speech can be used as a guide by those who will be campaigning."

One aspect, Musa said, that attracted him was Dr Mahathir's assessment and views of the Opposition parties.

"He has correctly de-

scribed their state of affairs ... they do not have principle of unification or understanding except to topple the Barisan Nasional Government.

"There is nothing else to unite them. They are in conflict with each other, be it in their policies or struggles."

He said it was difficult for the Opposition to reach an accord, thus they would not be a major threat to Umno and the BN in the coming election.

On the anticipated surprise announcement by Dr Mahathir, Musa said "the surprise is that there has been no surprise".

Former Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar and Federal Cabinet Minister Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said Dr Mahath-

ir's explanation that there was never a conspiracy to bring down Anwar had once and for all cleared Umno's name and that of its leaders.

There was no reason for accusations and ill-feelings now, he said.

The explanation had now convinced the people who should now focus on preparations for the general election, he said.

Rais, who has a doctorate in Law, said the Prime Minister's explanation on the Anwar issue did not affect Anwar's court case.

"He (Dr Mahathir) did not talk about court procedures and neither did he touch on the facts before the court. What he said is mostly public knowledge," he added.