

PM explains need to clarify Anwar issue again

The dismissal of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from government and Umno is still an issue at the party general assembly because some people "still have difficulty believing the facts".

Many have problems accepting the reason for Anwar's removal from Umno, party president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told a press conference.

He said they seemed to think Anwar was unjustly dealt with and that his black eye was the result of the government instructing that he should be beaten.

"Because of that, there is a feeling that Umno has not been as just and fair, and that this has led to some members supporting the Opposition, causing a split in the Malay ranks.

"So, we have to try and explain to them the truth, so that they can believe and see sufficient evidence that it is not politics which caused him to be removed but his immoral char-

acter," he said.

Speaking at the end of the first day of the assembly, Mahathir said such behaviour is unacceptable in Malaysia, and certainly not among the leaders, although it may be a natural thing in European societies.

Asked why after two years, the Anwar issue is still being discussed at the party assembly, he said the issue was actually considered closed.

"But we found that during last year's general election, the opposition parties used it extensively, especially the photograph of Anwar's black eye, and we cannot ignore the effect.

"We can't just close our book as if this is not happening when the fact remains that some people are still affected by that photograph," he said.

Asked if he has proof that PAS actually knew about Anwar's behaviour before he himself did, Mahathir said PAS leaders had given Anwar specific derogatory nicknames.