

Azalina: I'll not sue tabloid over lesbian report

STAR - 2 MAY 2002

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KUALA LUMPUR: Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said has chosen to ignore allegations that she is a lesbian and does not intend to sue the tabloid which reported the issue.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has also come out in her defence and accused those who made the allegations as "people who are bankrupt with no work".

Speaking to reporters in Kuala Terengganu, Azalina said the allegations about her gay tendencies has not affected Puteri Umno, which will be formalised as a constitutional component of Umno at the party's general assembly in June.

Several people had pressured her to file the suit against tabloid *Perdana Sari* for the alleged lies against her.

However, she said: "I will not waste money to take legal action against the paper."

The people behind the report were "mentally not stable", she told reporters after presenting school uniforms to 101 pupils of SK Pualau Rusa on Tuesday.

The tabloid, published by veteran journalist Khalid Jafri who wrote 50 *Dalil Mengupu Anwar Tidak Boleh Menjadi Perdana Menteri*, had claimed in his paper that Azalina was a lesbian.

He also claimed to have proof of Azalina's involvement with another woman and chal-

lenged the Puteri Umno leader to challenge him.

NICK LEONG reports that Dr Mahathir has advised Azalina to ignore the accusation, adding that it was the work of those who craved publicity.

"These are the type of people who are bankrupt with no work. They make malicious accusations because they want publicity," he said after opening a Workers Day function with senior government servants at the National Public Administration Institute yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the people responsible for making the accusation were not qualified to have a licence to publish, adding that Azalina should not take the matter to court.

"If you sue the persons, they will come up with all kinds of accusations and this will spread in the press. You might be innocent but by that time, you are finished," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he too was subjected to all kinds of malicious accusations.

"I know what they want to do. They want to have publicity, to run down people and bring up all kinds of things, relevant or not.

"It is all tricks, which we know smart lawyers could use. They can make use of the court for politics," he said.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that such accusations only start when the victims become successful.

"It is just a way of throwing

mud at people and thinking you are safe-because you can hide behind the court," he said.

Dr Mahathir said one of his sons was accused of earning RM900,000 serving as directors of several companies.

"He (Dr Mahathir's son) did not even receive a sen' but used his own money. He won't sue because he said he cannot be bothered by these people," he said, adding there were many traitors in the country.

In Penang, **K. SUTHAKAR** reports that Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has suggested to Azalina to explain her position if she felt victimised.

"It is important that she comes out with an explanation herself what is the point of others supporting her?" he asked, when speaking to newsmen after opening the Balik Pulau Umno division annual delegates' meeting.

Muhyiddin, who is Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, said Azalina should decide for herself on whether the explanation was necessary as such allegations were part and parcel of politics.

"I don't want Puteri Umno's image jeopardised by quarters questioning the leadership and character of the leaders . . . this burden should be shouldered by Azalina.

On Sunday Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was up to Azalina to decide whether or not to take legal action against the tabloid.