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# Chandra breaks silence on Anwar

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Prof Dr Chandra Muzaffar says people are being deceived by Anwar



Opposition Parti Keadilan Rakyat's de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

**PETALING JAYA:** "If Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim becomes the prime minister, it will be an unmitigated disaster for Malaysia."

That was the unhesitating reply of former Parti Keadilan Nasional deputy president Prof Dr Chandra Muzaffar who broke his silence on his years as Anwar's trusted lieutenant when asked a question on the opposition Parti Keadilan Rakyat's de facto leader at a forum here yesterday.

Asked why he was breaking his silence now, Chandra said it appeared that people were being deceived by Anwar.

"It is something for which I am prepared to go on record now so that people will not be deceived," he said.

Chandra, an academician who founded the reform movement Aliran and has also previously been detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA), was among many professionals and intellectuals who formed Keadilan because they were enraged with Anwar's sacking as deputy prime minister, his beating at the hands of then Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor and his subsequent charge for sodomy.

He was deputy president to Anwar's wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail from April 1999 until he quit over differences with the party in December 2005. He contested the 1999 general election as a Keadilan candidate but lost.

Since then, Chandra has refused to publicly state his reasons for leaving the party nor voice his differences with Anwar.

Yesterday, Chandra said that while Anwar was an engaging orator, he was now "speaking differently" from when he was in government.

Chandra said many non-Malays in the

country were being gulled by Anwar's multi-ethnic stand.

"Today he is taking a totally different image and it is sad that quite a lot of non-Malays believe in this man. He is saying today that he wants to abolish the NEP (New Economic Policy) and that is music to their ears.

"We are so communal that we cannot evaluate a person objectively," said Chandra, who was one of five speakers at The Star-Asian Centre for Media Studies Public Forum on the 2008 general election held at Menara Star yesterday.

Chandra said when Anwar was education minister he had forced a change in the nomenclature from Bahasa Malaysia to Bahasa Melayu, which set back national integration.

"Tunku Abdul Rahman wanted the use of Bahasa Malaysia to bring all the communities together and he (Anwar) forced Bahasa Melayu upon the school system," he said.

The government reverted to use of the term Bahasa Malaysia last year.

"Anwar (when he was Education Minister) was also responsible for appointing non-Chinese administrators in Chinese schools, which led to a political crisis in 1987," Chandra said.

He said many people did not remember the role Anwar played in resolving the Kampung Jawa clash between the Hindus and Indian Muslims in Penang.

"He said he would make sure the temple bells would not ring in the country anymore if his dictum was not accepted," Chandra said.

Speaking about the future of Malaysia, Chandra said the most important quality of a leader in a multi-ethnic country was honesty and consistency.

"When a leader speaks on sensitive ethnic issues he must say the same thing to the non-Malays as he does to Malay audiences. You cannot play games because it is very dangerous," he said.

Chandra also said that although the Barisan Nasional was flawed, there was no other viable coalition in the country.

He recalled his "bitter experience" trying to form an opposition alliance called the Barisan Alternative comprising Pas, the DAP, Parti Keadilan and Parti Rakyat Malaysia, whereby his task was to form a Just Malaysia manifesto for the 1999 election.

"The BA did very well and it was one of the best performances by the opposition but after the election Pas decided to pursue an ultraconservative Islam in Terengganu and this made it difficult for us.

"The DAP emphasised an aggressive type of secularism which does not understand the role of religion in the country. A deep chasm developed and the opposition could not hold a middle ground and I don't think they can for many, many years," Chandra said.