

Mahathir barred predecessor from leaving Malaysia amid probe

By Eileen Ng
The Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia's new leader, Mahathir Mohamad, said he barred his scandal-tainted predecessor and his wife from leaving the country to prevent them from fleeing from possible prosecution over a massive corruption scandal.

A leaked flight manifesto showed that Najib Razak and his wife Rosmah Mansor were planning to leave on a private jet to Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, fuelling rumors that he was bolting the country days after a shocking electoral defeat that ended his coalition's 60-year grip on power.

"There are a lot of complaints against him, all of which have to be investigated," Mahathir told a news conference. "We have to act quickly because we don't want to be saddled with extradition from other countries."

Mahathir said the investigations would take some time because investigators need to contact authorities in other countries and gather evidence. He has said Najib will "face the consequences" if any wrongdoing is found.

Najib said on social media that he was planning to take a short vacation to spend time with his family. The Immigration Department, which initially said there was no travel ban, later issued a statement that the former prime minister and his wife were blacklisted from leaving Malaysia.

Mahathir confirmed that he prevented Najib from departing. He said there was sufficient evidence to investigate Najib over the corruption scandal involving the 1MDB state fund that's being investigated in the United States and other countries. U.S. investigators say Najib's associates stole and laundered \$4.5 billion from the fund, with some \$700 million landing in Najib's bank account and around \$30 million used to buy jewelry for his wife. Najib has denied any wrongdoing.

Najib responded swiftly, saying he respects the Immigration Department's ruling and will remain in the country with his family. He also said he was committed to "facilitating a smooth transfer of power."

Najib also told a news conference that he was stepping down as president of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and as chairman of the National Front coalition to take responsibility for the election debacle. The announcement came after strong calls emerged from the UMNO, the linchpin of the coalition, for Najib to resign.

Najib, 64, said his deputy, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, would take over as UMNO president.

"We accept the people's verdict with an open heart," Najib said. "Maybe this will be an opportunity for us to fix our weaknesses and shortcomings, although these are more a matter of perception than reality. God willing, UMNO will continue to live."

The National Front, which has ruled Malaysia since independence from Britain, won only 79 of the 222 parliamentary seats, losing power to Mahathir's four-party alliance amid public anger over the 1MDB scandal and the rising cost of living.

New Singapore anti-terror law can order media blackout

SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore has introduced a law that gives the police special powers during terrorist attacks, including widely banning journalists and members of the public from reporting on the scene.

The law has the power to block all communications on-site ranging from photographs to videos, text and audio messages, for up to a month, if authorities feel security operations could be compromised.

The Ministry of Home Affairs said the law would make the police more effective in responding to terrorist threats. It cited previous attacks in Mumbai and Paris, where live broadcasts allegedly

allowed terrorists to anticipate the next move of security forces.



DEPARTURE DENIED. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (top photo) reads a note during a press conference in Putrajaya, Malaysia. Mahathir said he barred his scandal-tainted predecessor and his wife from leaving the country to prevent them from fleeing from possible prosecution over a massive corruption scandal. It was a remarkable comeback for the 92-year-old Mahathir, who was prime minister for 22 years until his retirement in 2003. Angered over the scandal, Mahathir teamed up with former foes, including jailed opposition icon Anwar Ibrahim (bottom photo), to oust Najib. Mahathir said Malaysia's king had agreed to pardon Anwar, who was jailed in 2015 for sodomy in a conviction that he said was politically motivated. (AP Photos/Vincent Thian)

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Mahathir said Malaysia's king had agreed to pardon Anwar, who was jailed in 2015 for sodomy in a conviction that he said was politically motivated.

Mahathir also appointed Lim Guan Eng, an ethnic Chinese, as finance minister, the first ethnic minority to be appointed to the powerful post in 44 years.

Since 1974, the finance minister had been a Muslim Malay. The appointment of Lim, a chartered accountant who has led the wealthy northern state of Penang since 2008, reflects reforms pledged by Mahathir's alliance to heal racial divisions in the country blamed on decades-old preferential policies.

Mahathir also named former Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin as home affairs minister and Mohamad Sabu as defense minister. All three appointees are party leaders in his alliance.

Individuals who flout the of two years in prison and a communications stop order fine of 20,000 Singapore dollars (\$14,891).



UNLIKELY EVIL. Surabaya police chief Col. Rudi Setiawan shows a picture of the family of Dita Oepriarto, who carried out church bombings on May 13 in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The family fanned out with suicide bombs attached to themselves and their children, attacking three churches. The entire family was killed in the attacks that killed a number of people and injured dozens of others. (AP Photo/Nanda Andrianta)

Family photo becomes new picture of militancy in Indonesia

By Margie Mason
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — In the photo, the mother rests one hand on her youngest son's arm. Two little sisters in the front hold flowers against matching red head scarves. Dad stands in the back next to the oldest son who has already outgrown him. The six are dressed in happy prints and colors — a purple batik shirt, a pink flowered dress — and mom's flowing headscarf is the color of sky.

It appears to be a picture of a happy middle-class Indonesian family. But it has shocked the world's most populous Muslim nation by becoming its new face of militant violence.

Friends and neighbors describe the Muslim parents as normal and nice, associating regularly with Christians who lived nearby and letting their home-schooled children play with others in the neighborhood.

But this month they fanned out with suicide bombs attached to themselves and their children, attacking three churches. The entire family was killed in Indonesia's second-largest city of Surabaya. At least 13 people died in the churches and more than 40 others were injured. The youngest human bomb, the little girl staring directly at the camera with big brown eyes, was just eight years old. Her big sister was 12.

Before people had time to fully process that children had been used for the first time to carry out a suicide attack in Indonesia, it happened again. Another family — including a seven-year-old child who survived — participated in a similar suicide mission at police headquarters in the same city days later.

Three members of a third family also died when homemade bombs exploded in their apartment, and three children survived.

Police said their investigation found the three families knew each other and came together on Sundays to study and recite the Quran. They indoctrinated their children in various ways at the meetings, including showing violent jihadist videos, East Java police chief Machfud Arifin said.

The father who carried out the church bombings, Dita Oepriarto, headed the Surabaya cell of Jemaah Anshorut Daulah, an Indonesian network of extremist groups affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) group, police said.

In all, 26 people — including 13 militants and their children — died. Authorities say the surviving children are being treated for physical and mental issues and will eventually be placed with safe family members.

"For the kids, I think this is craziness," said Taufik Andrie, who runs an Indonesian institute that helps rehabilitate former militants ready to rejoin society. "It's the first time in Indonesia. I'm afraid this will be a new trend."

Indonesia suffered its worst terrorist attack in 2002 on the resort island of Bali when 202 people, mostly foreign tourists, were killed in nightclub bombings. Jemaah Islamiyah, an al-Qaida-affiliated network, was responsible. The country has been relatively quiet in recent years after major cells connected to larger organized groups were stamped out.

The new spate of bombings happened just ahead of the holy Islamic month of Ramadan, and follows a melee at a detention center near Jakarta in which jailed Muslim extremists killed six officers. Andrie said much information leaked out after the incident, likely inciting others to act. IS has claimed responsibility for the recent violence in both cities.

"I think the message is simply that they can create

Continued on page 16



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