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Mahathir: I've never conspired against anyone

sor; Kamarul Yunus; Eirmalasare Bani; Shahrizan Johari
DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says he has never conspired against anyone but has been a victim of conspiracy to topple him as Prime Minister and Umno president.

"I have been accused of a conspiracy against Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. That doesn't make sense. I have never conspired against anyone including against other former deputy prime ministers, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah or other Umno leaders who fell out or were dropped.

"On the contrary, I did become a victim of a conspiracy to topple me," he told the 2,034 delegates of the 53rd Umno General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said he did not victimise Anwar by conspiring to stop him from becoming the Umno president and Malaysian prime minister.

Anwar was removed as deputy prime minister and finance minister and the party's deputy president last September. He is currently serving a six-year jail sentence after he was found guilty of corrupt practices.

"His morals and behaviour prevented him from becoming Umno president, in fact an Umno member."

Dr Mahathir said after he was sacked, Anwar threw all sorts of accusations against the Government, Umno and certain party leaders. He instigated Malays to hate Umno and its leaders and to riot and terrorise the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

He said Anwar had tarnished the country, the Government and Umno worldwide, used foreigners and the foreign media to support the actions of his supporters in efforts to topple the Government.

The Prime Minister described Anwar's act as a "betrayal" which had never been done by any past Umno leaders despite their frustrations.

"With this conduct, it was appropriate to sack him. It is extremely unsuitable for someone who is not loyal to the country to be a leader.

"If I had felt then that the action against him was too harsh, today I am of the opinion that the action taken against his misconduct is appropriate.

"The fate that befell him was caused by what he had done and because he was willing to use the veil of religion while performing acts contrary to the religion and tenets of his race," he added.

Dr Mahathir said although Anwar was his colleague and friend, the interest of the Malays and the nation prevented him from closing his eyes and allowing something bad to happen to the Malays and country.

"If I allowed that to happen, I would have betrayed my race, religion and country. This I am not willing to do, even for a friend, a compatriot.

"I would rather be condemned, cursed, criticised and ridiculed so long as I know in my heart - and God Almighty knows - that I did not betray my religion, race and the country I've sworn to defend and uphold."

Dr Mahathir said continued efforts are vigorously being carried out to sow hatred towards him, which will cause the Malays to reject Umno.

"They believe that even though those influenced by them would only be a small fraction of the Malays who support Umno, it would still weaken and affect Umno's struggle and reduce the Barisan Nasional's two-thirds majority which is vital for the country's stability and development.

"With instigation by certain quarters, this campaign of hatred is being increased. I have said that I would quit if I am not wanted anymore. But I too cannot feel slighted and be upset that I fail in my responsibility

towards Umno, Islam and country, a responsibility that I promised and swore to uphold," he said.

Describing the fate that befell Anwar as "very tragic, very sad", he said in the party's history some leaders had experienced similar fate. There were those who were expelled from the party (including Dr Mahathir himself), imprisoned and even sentenced to death.

"They and their families, wives and children felt the emotional pressure and sadness, no less than that felt by Anwar and his family ... (But) they did not accuse anyone of conspiring to topple them. They did not leave the party, did not condemn the party and did not conspire to destroy the party and the country."

Dr Mahathir said conspiracies cannot happen immediately and to conspire what he has been accused of doing is something that is not easy to carry out in secrecy as it involves many people.

He added he would have to get the cooperation from many police officers, prosecuting officers including public prosecutors, judges, the men and women who became Anwar's alleged victims, all Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers, all Supreme Council members and many others who would have to be in the know if the conspiracy is to succeed.

"In Malaysia where secrets are hard to keep, where poison pen letters and the Internet rule, to hide a plot involving lots of people is impossible. Such a large conspiracy would surely be exposed months before anything takes place because conspiracies take a long time to plan and for them to obtain the cooperation of many who must be involved."

He said until the day Anwar was expelled, there was no news on the Prime Minister and Umno president working to stop Anwar from becoming Prime Minister. "It was public knowledge that I named Anwar as my successor until the last moment.

"Because of the belief that Anwar would succeed me, many officers, Menteri Besar and party leaders at all levels did not dare question his actions and orders ... all afraid of retaliation once Anwar becomes prime minister."

Dr Mahathir said in the "crisis of thought" within a fraction of Umno members and supporters of Anwar, opposition parties would take advantage to weaken Umno.

To them, race, country and religion are not the priority. Their political interest is more important.

"The opposition is taking advantage of Anwar's misfortunes. His sacking, the charges brought against him and the court sentence do not cause them grief ... Anwar's misfortunes provide them the opportunity to use his family and supporters to strengthen their own parties and to weaken Umno.

"That is why they pretend to support Anwar. The same is true of Anwar, who now conspires with the opposition. He joins them for his own survival," he said.

He said the pact between Pas, DAP and a splinter group of Umno is merely because of their respective self-interest. There is no common struggle or objective in the pact other than self-interest.

Dr Mahathir said each party plans to hoodwink the other. Each will drop its partners once it makes some gains in the elections.

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