

## **How would UM treat Anwar if he were PM?**

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COMMENT Imagine a different reality on May 5, 2013. Pakatan Rakyat got its 51 percent of votes in all the right constituencies, which gave them a 60 percent majority instead. And Anwar Ibrahim was then sworn in as prime minister. And Najib Abdul Razak became the Parliamentary opposition leader.

Anwar would have been the third Universiti Malaya (UM) alumnus to be Malaysian prime minister, after Dr Mahathir Mohamad (from the Singapore campus) and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

But Anwar (left) would be the most legendary of them all - starting his political life as a student leader who eventually went to jail before eventually going into party politics and rising all the way to become the country's No2 and getting jailed again for wanting to be No 1?

What would happen if a talk were to be held on 'Anwar Ibrahim: 40 years from UM to jail'?

First of all, it would be unlikely to be organised by the Universiti Malaya Students Council (PMUM). More likely, the university would organise the talk itself and the opening speech would be delivered by the vice-chancellor.

Members of the university's top management, board of directors, senate, and deans of faculties, heads of departments would be sitting there listening attentively to former chief rabble rouser.

Some would be worried if Anwar would be vengeful for what they did when he was in opposition.

Others would try hard to get close to the education minister and his senior officials who accompany Anwar here, in the hope that the alma mater of the prime minister would get some windfall in research and development grants to beat Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) as the Apex University and other rivals.

And perhaps soon after the talk, the university might announce the setting up of a new centre on student and social Movements, with a special chair named after the prime minister.

The university would seek the police help in tightening security in campus, not to stop students from attending but to screen and prevent Perkasa or Isma members from entering the Dewan Tunku Canselor and calling Anwar "traitor" in the middle of his speech.

Reporters would be aplenty. RTM, Media Prima and all the mainstream media would have

their video cameras running from the beginning till the end. But foreign journalists would probably shy away, sensing nothing newsworthy.

Anwar would be mobbed by students who want to take a picture with him, when he finally walks out of the hall. Students' Facebook and Twitter walls would be flooded with their accounts of his charisma, vision, courage and whatnot.

'My Prime Minister, My Senior'

And soon you might see students walking around Bangsar and Petaling Jaya in T-shirts with Anwar's face and tagline 'My Prime Minister, My Senior'.

And all of these scenes would not happen because the Election Commission had done a great job in the constituency redelineation exercises in 2003 and 2005 that Anwar would likely go to prison rather than Putrajaya despite winning a popular mandate.

Because Anwar is not heading the government, the university sees the talk "an illegal gathering with the purpose of toppling the government".

That makes great sense, doesn't it? If Anwar is leading the government, then of course he would not be toppling it. And now that he is not, of course he is likely to.

There are industries, businesses and occupations out there where power and money decides entirely how a patron may be treated. As long as you can pay, you get whatever service you want.

I believe universities have to keep themselves apart from that segment of service industry. They exist for a higher purpose.

I am a Universiti Malaya alumnus, of the 1997 batch.

I am proud of my senior Anwar Ibrahim who fights for what he believes in since his university days, and my junior Fahmi Zainol, the Universiti Malaya Students Council who defies threats to expel or even jail him for organising Anwar's talk.

I thank them - together with academics like Azmi Sharom (right) and all the staff and students who stand by and walk with Azmi - for keeping Universiti Malaya a university. They send a clear message: people don't live by bread alone and certain things are simply not for sale.

Hopefully, many more will stand up and be counted tonight.

Integrity, not infrastructures or international rankings, makes the gowns worth their name.

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