

I admire Dr M, says UM rebel Fahmi
MalaysiaKini.com
Oct 30, 2014

INTERVIEW Universiti Malaya student leader Fahmi Zainol has in recent weeks emerged as the face of defiance against a seemingly authoritarian university subservient to the demands of political masters.

However, this Persatuan Mahasiswa Universiti Malaya (PMUM) president's move to organise a talk by Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim on Monday has earned him the label of being an opposition lackey.

In an interview with Malaysiakini, Fahmi defended his independence by stating that this label was far from the truth.

In fact, he said, he is a passionate admirer of Umno veteran and former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's thinking. That, however does not mean, he opposes Anwar.

What he admires of Mahathir is his masterful ousting of Anwar as then deputy prime minister.

Anwar is currently appealing against his second sodomy conviction, which he claims is a political conspiracy by Mahathir and Umno.

"Many may disagree with Mahathir, but we can take the opportunity to learn how he shaped the nation, how forward-looking and well-read he was, as well as his strategy in taking down Anwar.

"Craftiness (in politics) is perhaps a skill that we can learn from Mahathir," said Fahmi, who confessed that Mahathir's memoirs *A Doctor in The House* is among his favourite books.

'I criticise all'

However, the Penangite pointed out that just because of this, it does not make him anti-Anwar, for he chooses to remain critical of both sides of the divide.

Fahmi added that people could also refer to his track record, where he had on several occasions criticised the opposition.

"I recently criticised DAP leader Lim Kit Siang for slamming UM on its ranking and I had also opposed Anwar's actions in relation to the Kajang Move," said Fahmi, who is the third of six children.

He had disagreed with Lim's criticism of UM for refusing to participate in the Times Higher

Education Ranking, stating that academic staff should focus on educating students rather than pursuing rankings.

The Kajang Move refers to PKR triggering of the state by-election through a resignation, in an effort to elect Anwar into the state assembly.

Anwar's wife and PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail contested instead, after the Court of Appeal convicted Anwar on his Sodomy II charge.

Fahmi said the student movement should not choose to be with the government or opposition, but stand on its own values.

"Students have their own roles and idealism."

He drew examples of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution and Indonesia's Reformasi movement, both of which he said were triggered by students.

"If we rely on others, there would never be change. Like it or not, history has shown that it is students who are the ones that lead change," he said.

No to choosing between two evils

Cautiously, Fahmi, an undergraduate in management in policy and social environment, said that choosing between political parties is like choosing between two evils.

"If we have to support a political party, it would have to be the one that does the least damage," he said.

As for himself, partisan politics is not on the cards for the final semester student.

"I have planned to pursue a Masters degree and move on to PhD, so I will be a student for a long time still.

"So long as I am a student, I will not be in (partisan) politics," he said, but added that he was open to joining NGOs.

Fahmi was among the main movers in Monday's rally, where students broke through the UM's locked gates to hear Anwar, a UM alumnus, speak.

Anwar's talk, said to be a 'farewell speech' titled 'From UM to the prison' attracted 2,000 students and supporters, despite the university's attempt to block it through various means on grounds it was not authorised.

Source <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/278970>