

Khairuddin denies 'mentor' Dr M behind 1MDB report
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Batu Kawan Umno deputy chief Khairuddin Abu Hassan was propelled into the limelight last week after he broke party ranks and lodged a police report against Putrajaya's controversial sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

His move against what is seen as Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's pet project raised eyebrows and prompted questions about the grassroots politician who hails from Bukit Mertajam.

Even though Khairuddin (right) insisted he is only a "minor" (kerdil) Umno member, this is not the first time he has stood on the national stage and his name remains unforgettable among senior Umno leaders.

Khairuddin was the publisher of the infamous book "50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM (50 reasons why Anwar cannot be PM)" authored by Khalid Jafri in 1998, which accused then Umno deputy president Anwar Ibrahim of corruption and homosexuality.

"I was the first person who made three police reports against the deputy prime minister, who is also the deputy Umno president and finance minister in 1998.

"Umno leaders at that time were still kissing Anwar's hand but I fought against him," Khairuddin told Malaysiakini in an interview last Saturday.

Khairuddin is a third cousin of Anwar.

The manoeuvrings marked the beginning of Anwar's end in Umno and facilitated then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's bid to remove his deputy.

Family history with Dr M

It is no surprise then that Khairuddin's police report against 1MDB set off alarm bells.

Khairuddin was seen as Mahathir's proxy during the bid to remove Anwar in 1998 and his re-emergence has raised questions whether the former prime minister, who has publicly renounced support for Najib, is making his move against the prime minister.

Speculation of this link also stemmed from the long history of Khairuddin's family with the elder statesman.

Khairuddin's uncle, Sulaiman Ahmad, better known as Sulaiman Palestine, had in 1978 mounted a challenge against then prime minister Hussein Onn for the Umno presidency, eventually paving the way for Mahathir's rise.

Even though Hussein succeeded in fending off the challenge, the substantial vote received by a relatively minor politician weakened him and he was succeeded by Mahathir just three years later.

Despite Khairuddin's family history of unseating Umno heavyweights, he denied that there was any collaboration with Mahathir (left), be it in the case of Hussein, Anwar or now with Najib.

Khairuddin, who calls Mahathir his mentor, insisted that the former prime minister had no hand in the police report lodged against 1MDB.

"When I made the police report, if I had sought advice from Mahathir or was guided by him, I would surely have received a phone call from him congratulating me," he said.

'My mentor, but not mastermind'

Khairuddin said he sought a meeting with Mahathir on 1MDB for several months but to no avail.

Mahathir, in renouncing support for Najib in August, had complained about the premier's policies including 1MDB which has accumulated a whopping RM41.9 billion in debt.

The Umno stalwart also complained about the party's reluctance to discuss the matter at the Umno general assembly last month.

Khairuddin said the fact that three former finance ministers, namely Mahathir, Anwar and Daim Zainuddin (right), had come out to express concern about 1MDB speaks volumes.

Despite this, he said, Umno leaders had been less than responsive and he has therefore taken the issue upon himself.

"To 1MDB, I want to make it clear: the game is not over yet, it still has a long way to go, don't worry.

"If there is any element of graft or corruption in 1MDB - if there are - I vow to the public at large.

"I will shoulder this responsibility without fear and favour, to fight 1MDB all the way until the end. This is my vow," Khairuddin said.

This interview was jointly conducted by Nigel Aw, Ahmad Fadli KC and Zikri Kamarulzaman.