

**Dr M admits speaking to Sirul, offered to help secure asylum**  
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Dr Mahathir Mohamad had offered to help former police commando Sirul Azhar Umar obtain asylum in Australia.

The former prime minister said this in an interview with 60 Minutes; an Australian current affairs programme that featured a segment on Malaysia titled 'Dirty Secrets' yesterday.

Mahathir was asked if he offered Sirul, who is currently detained in Sydney's Villawood Immigration Detention Centre, any inducement to "tell the truth" about murder of Altantuya Shaariibuu.

"No inducements... I did try to speak to him over the phone.

"I did tell him that if I can help him get asylum in Australia, because of his fear if something happens to him if he comes back, I would try," he replied.

In January 2015, the Federal Court overturned the acquittal of Sirul and another former police commando, Azilah Hadri, over the 2006 murder.

The pair was sentenced to death, but Sirul had fled to Australia before the court decision.

Australian law dictates that a person facing the death penalty in his or her home country cannot be sent back.

In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini via telephone in February 2015, Sirul maintained that he had acted under orders and was being made a scapegoat.

Prime Minister Najib Razak has dismissed Sirul's claims as "utter rubbish".

Najib was implicated when his closest ally, political strategist Abdul Razak Baginda, was initially charged with abetting the murder but was acquitted without his defence being called.

Razak was involved in the multi-billion ringgit procurement of two Scorpene submarines when Najib was defence minister and deputy prime minister.

The police had cleared Najib of any involvement and the prime minister also swore on the Quran that he did not know Altantuya and that he was not involved in her murder.

Recently, several of videos of Sirul surfaced, in which he denied Najib's involvement in the case and that Altantuya was pregnant at the time of her death.

Sources familiar with the videos had claimed there would be another video in which Sirul would reveal the names of those who had asked him to implicate Najib, but this was never released.

In the 60 Minutes interview, Mahathir also argued that a dictator who is willing to serve the people is not bad.

"When you have a dictator who is dedicated to serving the people, I think it is not a bad thing to have power."

"But if you have a man who is not a dictator but abuses everything, and undermines all the authorities of government..." Mahathir said, before the interviewer intervened and asked if he were referring to Najib.

"Yeah...yeah," ex-premier was heard as responding.

Mahathir also reiterated that he is not concerned about the prospect of being arrested or imprisoned.

"No risk, no gain," he said, adding that if he had to go to jail, he would although he would find conditions there "uncomfortable".

To another question on how Australians know Mahathir as an "autocrat" and former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating describing him as "recalcitrant", Mahathir merely replied: "I stand by my principles."

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