

Azmin: I still love and respect Dr M, but Anwar is a bitter person

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Despite parting ways when Perikatan Nasional (PN) was formed, Senior Minister Azmin Ali said he still regards ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a father figure whom he views with respect and love.

"I still have so much respect, love, and affection for Dr Mahathir. He is our statesman.

"I may disagree on what he did on Feb 24 when he tendered his resignation without sharing that with us beforehand," Azmin told The Star in an exclusive interview.

He said that Mahathir's surprise resignation scuppered plans to have him head a unity government with the backing of 131 MPs and that current Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin was the one chosen to fill the vacuum.

"I think we should just allow Muhyiddin to lead, especially during this pandemic.

I think he has done a very good job – very focused on handling the Covid-19 pandemic and reviving the economy with less politics, said Azmin who is also Gombak MP.

Azmin revealed today that the PN plan originated from Mahathir himself in order to make him a prime minister supported by all MPs across all parties. He added that the general election would have been held last month if not for the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic currently faced by the country.

Azmin also described himself as a reluctant politician.

“When I served (PKR president) Anwar Ibrahim (as an aide) for 15 years, I had no interest in becoming active in politics until he was sacked in 1998.

“Then I had to be together with the rakyat, part of the reformasi and later part of the political party (first Parti Keadilan Nasional, then Parti Keadilan Rakyat or PKR).

“I am not ambitious in politics. In PKR, I was denied in 2008 when we won in Selangor,” said Azmin in reference to the appointment of Khalid Ibrahim as Selangor Menteri Besar.

"When he (Khalid) was removed unceremoniously by Anwar, the intention was not for me to succeed.

"By divine intervention, I was made the Selangor MB. I worked very hard and in the last general election in 2018, for the first time, Pakatan (Harapan) won 51.56 percent of the votes in Selangor.

"Then, when the Pakatan government in Selangor was formed, my name was not there again.

"I was told to go to the Federal Government, and I had to sit with the Sultan of Selangor to get his consent to move from Selangor to the Federal Government," said Azmin.

He insisted he was not to blame for the falling out with Anwar, which was a contributing factor to the collapse of the Harapan government.

"I had served him for 30 years – officially for 15 years when (he) held the posts of Education and Finance Ministers and DPM (deputy prime minister).

"I also took care of his family when he was in prison. I thought after he was released from prison, he would come out a better person.

“Unfortunately, he became a bitter person – not only for me but for the whole nation.

“You can see that his close staff left him and many others from his previous personal team have also left him,” said Azmin, emphasising that he was not alone in abandoning Anwar.

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