

Pendang MP - Dr M took 6 years to crack down, Anwar took 3 months

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Hidir Reduan Abdul Rashid

PAS lawmaker Awang Hashim cited the time difference between Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar Ibrahim's administrations in relation to their respective dragnets against political rivals.

Arguing that it was the time factor which he had referred to in concluding that Anwar is "more vindictive" than his predecessor, the Pendang MP said Mahathir's first act after becoming prime minister in 1981 was to release 21 detainees under the now defunct Internal Security Act (ISA).

Awang (above) pointed out that the infamous Operasi Lalang crackdown under the same security law during Mahathir's tenure, which the former premier has denied orchestrating, happened six years after he took office.

On the other hand, he said Anwar's political rivals were hauled to court within three months after the latter became prime minister on Nov 24, 2022.

Awang made the comparison between the two leaders in his statement of defence against Anwar's defamation suit.

"Comparing the controversial act of Mahathir's administration and the controversial act of the plaintiff's government now, it clearly shows that in terms of the period of time, the Operasi Lalang only took place six years after Mahathir was appointed as prime minister, while the charges against the political rivals of the plaintiff took place within three months of his appointment as prime minister," he said.

The defendant alleged that the criminal charges against former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin and Bersatu MP Wan Saiful Wan Jan contradicted Anwar's claim of not practicing politics of vengeance.

Awang claimed that the criminal cases came after the plaintiff issued a public statement on Dec 5 last year accusing Perikatan Nasional of receiving gambling funds and that there had been misuse of monies meant for the Jana Wibawa scheme.

Alliance with Zahid

The Pendang MP also noted how Anwar had stopped making statements

regarding Umno president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's role in the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) scandal after the two formed an alliance and the latter was appointed as deputy prime minister.

"Both situations above bring about a clear conclusion that the plaintiff's government would try to protect or delay the resolving of any issues involving current political allies, but would be quick and stern against political rivals, especially PN," he claimed.

On March 3, Anwar filed the defamation action against Awang over two allegations - firstly that the PKR president allegedly abused his powers by interfering in Malaysia's enforcement and prosecution agencies, and secondly over the issue of the plaintiff's appointment as the 10th prime minister.

Awang is citing the defence of justification and fair comment. The former involved the defendant being prepared to prove in court the statement or allegation made while the latter is that the statement was made as a fair comment, rather than as a statement of fact, over an issue of public interest.

According to his statement of defence, Awang said he did not question the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's decision to appoint Anwar but made a fair comment on the "pre-appointment process".

The defendant claimed that he was making an observation backed by facts on Anwar's "plot with Zahid" to force 10 BN MPs to retract their support for Muhyiddin to be prime minister.

Anwar is represented by lawyer Sankara Nair while the law firm Amalin & Faizi is acting for Awang.

Anwar objects against Awang filing defence 'out of time'

Meanwhile, when contacted after High Court case management of the suit later today, Anwar's lawyer Sankara said they had raised an objection against Awang filing his defence out of time.

The counsel said the court was informed about the defendant's alleged failure to file within the legally stipulated period, namely 14 days from the date that Awang filed an appearance in the legal action on March 7.

He said that they had also applied for a judgment in default of defence to be recorded against the defendant due to this purported procedural failure.

Sankara added that after recording the objection, deputy registrar Aisyaf Falina Abdullah directed that the matter be brought before the judge to be further

ventilated, during the next case management on a date to be fixed later.

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