

## **Comparing me to Dr M 'totally absurd' - Anwar replies to Pendang MP**

**Malaysiakini**

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**Hidir Reduan Abdul Rashid**

Anwar Ibrahim contended that PAS lawmaker Awang Hashim's attempt to compare the sitting prime minister to former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad over alleged vindictiveness in dissident crackdowns was "totally absurd".

In the Tambun MP's reply to the Pendang MP's statement of defence against his defamation suit, Anwar denied the comparison, reiterating that all investigation agencies and prosecutorial services in Malaysia act independently, impartially, and without fear or favour.

The Pakatan Harapan chairperson contended that Awang comparing the plaintiff with Mahathir over alleged vindictiveness was defamatory and driven by bad faith, and that the defendant's alleged defamatory statement was directed against him (Anwar).

"As such, the same (defendant's statement) remains defamatory of the plaintiff. All reference to Mahathir by the defendant is totally irrelevant and ought not to have been made by the defendant.

“However, in doing so, the defendant has raised aggravating circumstances in this suit against the plaintiff and the plaintiff shall be entitled to substantial aggravated damages.

“The comparison made and pleaded by the defendant is totally absurd and untenable, and the burden of proof is on him. In any event, the defendant is put to strict proof of the same,” Anwar contended in the reply sighted by Malaysiakini and filed at the High Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

### **Dragnets against political rivals**

In his defence, Awang cited the time difference between Mahathir and Anwar’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 was “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 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 cited 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.

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.

Anwar was represented by the law firm SN Nair & Partners, while lawyers from Tengku Amalin & Faizi acted for Awang.

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