

Anwar was 'very cold' towards me
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The once close ties which ex-PKR Youth chief Mohamad Ezam Md Nor shared with Anwar Ibrahim has now been reduced to polite acknowledgment whenever the two meet at functions.

MCPX

ezam interview 310508 3Revealing this in an interview with Malaysiakini, Ezam described PKR de facto leader Anwar as being "very cold" to him but was quick to add that he takes all this in good faith.

The charismatic anti-corruption politician made news earlier week when he rejoined Umno despite being a fierce critic of the ruling party for more than 10 years.

In the final part of this interview, Ezam talks about rumours about being a 'Trojan horse', Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's advice to him and his relationship with Malaysian Indian United Party (MIUP) KS Nallakaruppan,.

Did Anwar Ibrahim know about your discussions with Umno leaders to join the party?

No, I don't have any contact with him since I left the party. He did not make any attempts to contact me. Sometimes we might meet on occasions like kenduri (thanksgiving dinner) or funerals and we greet each other but we don't make any conversations.

He was very cold towards me but I take it in good faith. So all the contact I have with Prime Minister (Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) and deputy PM (Najib Abdul Razak) lately was not known to him.

There has been a blog set up a few days ago documenting the police and ACA reports you had made before you rejoined Umno. Do you think your views have changed?

There is a smear campaign to discredit me and I have friends in PKR, they too know that my strength is in my morality and integrity. I have no money unlike many other leaders. I still stand by what I have said previously. When I met Abdullah, we did not discuss about retraction of any reports I had made (against him). He did not ask and I did not offer. I have done my job and the reports are now with the police and the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA).

It's not like I joined Umno and retracted all my statements against Abdullah. If that happened, you can question me but I did not. What I have done in the past is consistent with what I'm doing now. The bravery of Abdullah to give ACA freedom means all corruption reports will be investigated fairly and this includes reports made against him by me.

anwar ibrahim breaking fast function 061006 ezamWho would have thought that this was possible? When Anwar was DPM, at best he did was to push for a provision to empower ACA a little, which is not even close to what Abdullah had announced recently. It's not like I want to compare the two, I am not here for the individual. I am for the policy and this (anti-corruption) policy is significant.

All I have said in the past relates back to this - that the cause of all the country's problems from (political) parties to (the plight of the) Malays stems from corruption. When Abdullah announced that ACA will be made independent, to me this is my stone and I hold to that and this is my space to pursue what I believe.

I can play the same game by publishing all of Anwar's speeches when he was in Umno where he supported the New Economic Policy and pro-Malay policies endlessly that contradicts what he says today but I don't play politics like that. I'm forward looking without compromising my principles.

Are you saying Anwar's people are behind this?

I think the groups that are most threatened with my decision are (Anwar's people). Normally, it's the most threatened people who would resort to this.

You don't think it could be people from Umno who are uncomfortable with your re-entry into the party?

Maybe. Any anti-reform elements (in Umno) might do that but I don't think they have that sort of comprehensive archives compared to my friends in PKR.

How will you deal with the political culture of Umno members who are afraid to go against something that is not right in the party?

The whole process is not completed but what is important is the space to further strengthen - and the commitment to a free - ACA is fundamental. To have someone in power, like the PM, to make such a commitment is very significant.

There are enough elements in Umno in furthering the agenda of reforms. In media, we can see the information minister (Ahmad Shabery Cheek) initiating quite positive reforms. I saw the statement by Rembau MP Khairy (Jamaluddin) about freedom of the media, which is very positive and brave, coming from administration and ruling party.

Do you think your 'disloyalty' to the party will put you in contradiction with Umno's political culture, which is putting loyalty to the party before self?

There are some cultures that remain and there are some cultures that we can change. I'm not asking them to follow me. I'm just an ordinary member. If I can make a small change - we must teach members to be loyal to the cause and not just the party. The problem with big parties is the spirit of the struggle.

We must return to the basis of this struggle and if given the chance to discuss with Umno leaders - they hope to get insights from me on how to return the spirit of the struggle back to the party.

What do you think about allegations that you're a PKR spy or a Trojan horse?

ezam joins back umno 280508 03These allegations come from two parties. Umno is worried that I would bring Anwar in. While Anwar is worried that I would bring PKR members into Umno. Both sides are saying, 'don't worry, this is part of our game'.

I have no agenda. I returned to Umno without a personal agenda for anybody - not for PKR or Umno, or even Abdullah. I am in Umno with a reform agenda. To be a spy is the lowest

moral standing that any politician should have and that's definitely not my stand.

Will there be more of your supporters joining Umno?

I have no plans to bring more people to Umno or create a wave. I am confident that it is based on faith and it's up to them. Some of them who are very close to me since Day One did not follow me. If you have the conviction that you can perform effectively in Umno or PKR or PAS, then do it.

How will you be maintaining your independence in fighting corruption when Umno is riddled with money politics?

Of course, that is very tough to be independent in a political party but I will try my best to pursue my ideals for reform without fear or favour within Umno. I do not know the consequences or how Umno is going to react but I think if they have learned their lessons right in the last general election, I think they should be more open to critics from within.

Do you know what position you hope to get within Umno?

(Laughs) I wouldn't know. It's too early.

Did Abdullah specifically say what he wants you to do with regards to reform when you join Umno?

Being a simple man like Abdullah, he just told me, 'buat apa-apa lah Ezam, janji baik, jangan buat yang tak baik' (do anything Ezam, as long as it's good for the party, don't do anything that is bad). In verbatim, that's what he said (laughs). I see it in a positive way, he gave me a blank cheque to do anything good.

Will you be involved in the setting up of the new Malaysian Commission on Anti-Corruption (MCAC)?

ezam interview 310508 2I'm not sure. (Abdullah) did not indicate anything but I would like to get involved - not to get a position but to share my views on ISA (Internal Security Act) and OSA (Official Secrets Act). I hope by sharing my views with them and hope they would accept the review of ISA, OSA, UUCA (Universities and University Colleges Act) and PPPA (Printing Presses and Publications Act) because I was a victim under most of the Acts.

If you have evidence of corrupt practices in Umno, will you reveal it to the public?

Yes, of course. When we are in power we have direct access to the people in power, we have the means to do that. I'll give a chance to the members to explain themselves. I don't want to be seen to not follow the procedure within the party but if I am not happy, I will take the next course.

How do you explain the way the public perceives corruption as being perpetrated by politicians and yet nothing is being done about it?

That's why in any form of watchdog - monitoring or enforcement - the element of independence is important. The strength of ACA or the Attorney-General's Chambers or the police should come from their independence.

In political posturing, politicians are willing to do anything but give independence to ACA.

Mahathir might speak about ACA's independence but he won't give it (to them). To a certain extent, neither would Anwar when he was DPM. They would have never given ACA independence.

To me, if a politician is really honest, he will give the element of independence to these bodies and this is what's been happening recently that made me depart. It's not an easy departure. This is the toughest decision (I've made) in my life - to go back to a party which I criticised heavily for the past 10 years. It's not easy for me and my family. (But) I'm only loyal to reforms. I cannot be held back by sentiments.

I remember in a speech I made once, that if tomorrow PM makes ACA independent, I will join Umno the day after. I believed they would never give ACA independence because you would lose control and you cannot play politics anymore. When PM made his announcement, I picked it up because to me this is major (news).

What kind of relationship do you have with KS Nallakaruppan - who is seen to have a 'tainted' reputation - since he has been appearing in public with you?

Nalla is quite important to me. If you look the reformasi history, only two politicians went to jail for Anwar - Nalla and I. The rest went to Kamunting, not to prison.

Both of us no longer see eye-to-eye with Anwar. So there must be a very big question mark (on why we left PKR). There must be a reason why we made this decision because I have gone through so much for Anwar and it is not easy to leave the person I have lost almost everything for. Same with Nalla who almost got the death sentence because of Anwar. There must be a reason.

How many people would have done what Nalla did? But regarding his political decisions, I leave it to him. Even when he first met me and told me about setting up a new party, I disagreed because to me, if he wants to set up an NGO, don't go into politics. That was my view but he discussed with BN leaders so it was his decision.

Can you give us an update on the six boxes of documents with evidence of corrupt practices allegedly stashed overseas by Anwar?

I don't know it is still with him. I told the police about the six boxes, I've seen them at a glance before Anwar was arrested. I told them to go get them from Anwar but they stopped at that. I've already given the police a statement about this - go find Anwar. I still remember joking (about it) - that it was not very difficult to find him, he was in prison. I don't know what the outcome was.

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