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Dr M made U-turn on rallies, says Azalina

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BERSIH 5: He might have changed due to old age, says minister

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BARISAN Nasional leaders have hit out at former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) leaders for making a U-turn on Bersih and illegal rallies.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said the longest-serving prime minister might have changed "due to old age".

"Since I started out in politics, I always believed that Dr Mahathir, and most of former BN members of parliament, would abide by rules and regulations. So, if they break the law, they know they have to face the consequences," she said at Parliament lobby yesterday.

On Saturday, thousands of Bersih 5 and Red Shirt supporters took to the streets here to demonstrate.

Dr Mahathir, along with his son Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir and former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, were said to have hijacked the rally and eclipsed other opposition leaders who were present.

Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan said while opposition leaders were demonstrating on the streets in last week's rally, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was busy taking care of the country.

"Dr Mahathir joined the rally and gave a speech, although we all know his previous opinions on rallies and (DAP adviser) Lim Kit Siang.

"We need to remind the people of this U-turn, and how he has turned against what he believes in and sold out on his principles.

"The public can think for themselves who's relevant and who's not," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday at Parliament.

Meanwhile, opposition leaders dismissed claims that Dr Mahathir and Muhyiddin hijacked the Bersih 5 rally, saying that the duo had every right to attend.

"It is a hijack if they barged in and spoke.

"This issue shouldn't even arise because Bersih had started its rallies seven weeks ago, and many of us, the opposition politicians, gave our own speeches," said Kuala Terengganu MP Raja Kamarul Bahrin of Parti Amanah Negara.

On the other hand, PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar described the claim as "the latest spin" by the media, saying that the rally was a success, although Bersih 2.0 chairman Maria Chin Abdullah was arrested on the eve of the rally.