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'PPBM seeking Anwar's blessing'

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COLLABORATION:
Mukhriz admits PKR de facto leader's backing crucial for close ties

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DATUK Seri Mukhriz Mahathir has admitted that Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) needs the endorsement of jailed former opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim if it were to forge close ties with PKR.

Mukhriz, who is PPBM vice-pres-

ident, said he hoped Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's meeting with the PKR de facto leader last week would lead to an official collaboration between his party and PKR.

"We hope that it will progress towards an official collaboration at a party-to-party level," he said on Saturday night.

"It is important to get Anwar's endorsement (for this cause), especially commitment from PKR itself."

The former Kedah menteri besar was commenting on Dr Mahathir's handshake with his longtime nemesis last Monday at the Kuala Lumpur High Court, which was hearing Anwar's application to nullify the National Security Council (NSC) Act.

Mukhriz's admission came amid speculation that Dr Mahathir was attempting to win Anwar's support

for his campaign to unseat Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Mukhriz, however, made it clear that the current collaboration between Dr Mahathir and Anwar was centred solely on the NSC Act.

"From what I understand, Dr Mahathir has given his input on what should be included in Anwar's affidavit, which are some points he thinks will help in the case."

Najib's press secretary, Datuk Seri Tengku Sarifuddin Tengku Ahmad, was quoted as saying on Saturday that Dr Mahathir's recent meeting with Anwar was further evidence of the former's desperation.

He said that this showed that Dr Mahathir's "selfish political agenda" had failed.

He had also said the meeting had reduced PPBM president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to a "lame duck" and a "puppet president", whose political future now relied on Anwar.



Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir

Sarifuddin had said the meeting meant that Muhyiddin would have to be subservient to Anwar, as it was Anwar who could say "yes or no" to Dr Mahathir's pleadings.

Dr Mahathir sacked Anwar in 1998 as the deputy prime minister.

Anwar was also sacked from Umno. He was later charged with corruption and with sodomy separately.

He was sentenced to six years' jail in 1999 on four counts of corruption and was released on Sept 2, 2004.

He is serving a five-year jail term on another sodomy conviction.

Meanwhile, in Gombak, PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali said discussions on whether PPBM would join Pakatan Harapan were still ongoing.

He also said Pakatan Harapan and PPBM would discuss seat allocations for the upcoming general election to avoid multi-cornered fights against Barisan Nasional.

"So far, there is no conclusive agreement on the matter.

"But certainly, PPBM will play a major role in the next (general) election.

"We have to consider the interests of our partners in Pakatan Harapan and also our working relationship with Pas.

"With a new party in the mix, we have to consider all the options to ensure that it will be a one-on-one battle in the 14th General Election."