PM: I'M NO PUPPET OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY

Anwar refutes Dr M's jibe that he is bowing to DAP's whims to make nation 'multiracial'

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim signing a plaque to launch a book at the Madani Forum in Putrajaya yesterday. With him are (from left) Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali, Jakim director-general Datuk Hakimah Mohd Yusoff and Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday took a thinly-veiled dig at Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad over the latter's accusations that the unity government was adhering to DAP's manifesto and promoting Malaysia as a multiracial country.

He made it clear that he was the prime minister of the unity government and he was not a political puppet to any party.

"Recently, there was an argument suggesting that we (the unity government) were bowing down to DAP. Ladies and gentleman, let me tell you this... I am the PM (prime minister of this country). I am no one's puppet.

"Alhamdulillah, I will turn 76 soon and with that I cannot be bought by mere ringgit," he said when launching the Madani Forum entitled "The ethics of differences of opinion in strengthening national unity".

Anwar also appeared to hit back at Dr Mahathir over the latter's claim that promoting Malaysia as a multiracial country was against the Federal Constitution.

Anwar said he always governed the country based on the principles of the Constitution.

"In the Madani concept espoused by the federal government under my leadership, we want to emphasise manners, the participation and understanding of not just Muslims, but also non-Muslims.

"However, when we are doing this, they will say I am promoting Malaysia as a multiracial country. They will say we are a Malay country and it is against the Constitution to promote Malaysia in such a way, but I do not understand.

"Isn't Malaysia a multiracial country?"

Dr Mahathir had claimed recently that Anwar was adhering to DAP's manifesto.

"Despite DAP having only four ministers in the cabinet, there are 40 DAP members in the government, If they pull their support, Anwar's government could topple.

"Therefore, Anwar must heed DAP's manifesto especially in making the country a multiracial one, and that the official religion of Islam be changed to a secular country," the former prime minister had said.

Dr Mahathir had also alleged that promoting the country as multiracial nation was against the Federal Constitution, claiming that the country's paramount law emphasised the Malays and had never mentioned that the country was multiracial.

Anwar, who is Pakatan Harapan chairman and PKR president, said he valued the presence, importance and contributions of DAP as a member of PH and an ally in the federal government under his leadership.

He added that DAP had never questioned any programme or allocations set aside by the federal government to improve the wellbeing of Malays and the Muslim community in the country.

"I am not defending my colleagues from the DAP in the cabinet and the chief secretary to the government can attest to this.

"During the past seven months, they (DAP) never questioned the programmes for the Malays, the poor and for Islam. Never. Therefore, I do not want to punish or blame them (DAP)," he said.

Anwar also dismissed claims that his administration had sidelined the welfare of the Muslim community.

The federal administration under his leadership, said Anwar, did not only boost the position of the Department of Islamic Development (Jakim), but had also increased the allocation to improve the welfare and wellbeing of the Muslims in the country.

He said the federal government had also increased the allocation for Malay-majority states, such as Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis.

"We increased and did not reduce the allocations for these states. However, there were some quarters who continued with their petty politics, riding on religion and resorting to misleading the people by slandering the federal government," he said.

Anwar also took a swipe at some Malay politicians who claimed to be fighting for Malays and the national language.

"The people who are constantly shouting about fighting for Malays are also the ones that forgot about (upholding the status of) Bahasa Malaysia when they were in power."

Present yesterday were Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali and Jakim director-general Datuk Hakimah Mohd Yusoff. Anwar's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, was also present.