

# 'Dr M's lawsuit a desperate attempt to regain political credibility, relevance'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the defamation lawsuit filed against him by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was aimed at undermining his credibility, the government's and to create racial divide in view of the upcoming state elections.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir, as the plaintiff, is only raising issues regarding the plight of the Malays in a desperate attempt to regain his political credibility and relevance at any cost.

He said Dr Mahathir, who is former prime minister, was raising the issues after the spectacular loss the latter and his party suffered in the 15th General Election.

He also noted that similar statements had been made against Dr Mahathir in the past, yet the latter did not take any legal action.

Dr Mahathir, said Anwar, had every opportunity during his 22 year and 22-month tenure, to create and implement policies to uplift the Malays.

"Instead, when no longer in power now, he raises these issues in an attempt to undermine the defendant and to remain polit-

ically relevant.

"The plaintiff also held the position as Finance and Education Minister for a substantial number of years, wherein he had every opportunity to create and implement policies to uplift the Malays. Instead, when no longer in power, he raises these issues in an attempt to undermine the Defendant and to remain politically relevant.

"Instead of prioritising the welfare of the Malays, the plaintiff's tenure as prime minister was tainted with various financial controversies, including bail-outs and privatisation policies which benefited a selected few, as opposed to the Malay community at large," he said.

Anwar said the state of the Malays, which is so criticised by the Dr Mahathir now, was largely the result of his leadership since he was the country's longest serving prime minister.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir was the 'engineer' behind the destruction of his own political reputation.

Dr Mahathir, he said, engineered the growth of an authoritarian political culture during his tenure as the prime minister.

He claimed Dr Mahathir's administration was marred with numerous corruption scandals, media oppressions and attacks on the judiciary and rule of law.

"The defendant avers that the reputation and credibility of the plaintiff has been and will be judged on the basis of his own conduct.

"His (Dr Mahathir) malicious and baseless attacks on the present government in an attempt to redeem himself politically at any cost, including but not limited to instigating racial turbulence and undermining political, economic and social stability, has led to him no longer being perceived as a credible person," said Anwar.

Anwar said this in his defence against Dr Mahathir's RM150 million defamation suit against the former for allegedly accusing the latter of being racist and enriching himself and his family members during his 22-year tenure as prime minister.

Dr Mahathir claimed that Anwar made the impugned statement in his speech during PKR's special national congress held at the Melawati Stadium in Shah Alam on March 18.