

**Dr M: Acquittal proves no conspiracy against Anwar**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's acquittal from a sodomy charge proved there was no political conspiracy against his one-time protege.

The former prime minister (picture) added that today's court ruling would also go towards cleansing the image and credibility of the Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

"Even though I was surprised that he was found innocent this proves there is no conspiracy from before until now," he told reporters after attending a function in Putrajaya today.

Anwar, 64, had been similarly indicted of sodomy over a decade ago and was found guilty. He spent six years in jail before being exonerated.

In the 1990s Anwar had been groomed to succeed Dr Mahathir until a bitter row between them saw Anwar ousted in 1998.

Anwar has maintained that his prosecution for sodomy was politically-motivated and a plot to kill his political career.

Today's verdict defied the expectations of political observers and even Anwar, who had alleged that a guilty verdict was predetermined.

Dr Mahathir said the opposition's negative perception of the judiciary was clearly wrong and had no basis.

"Some people say that this government is cruel, to the point that it manipulates judges. This has never happened," he said.

The High Court today acquitted Anwar of a charge of sodomising his former male aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan.

Judge Mohd Zabidin Mohd Diah ruled that the prosecution had not done enough to prove Anwar had committed sodomy against Saiful.

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