

No need to apologise to Anwar, says Dr Mahathir
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Mahathir Mohamad says Anwar Ibrahim's imprisonment when he was PM is a thing of the past and both are now focussed on overthrowing the present government.

PETALING JAYA: Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad says he will not apologise to PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, who was sent to jail 18 years ago when he was leader of the country.

Mahathir, who is now PPBM chairman said the incident was "in the past" and not related to Anwar's current prison sentence over a case popularly referred to as "Sodomy 2", during the present leadership of Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Speaking during an interview with SBS, an Australian broadcast agency, the 91-year old said leaders in the opposition coalition were prepared to forget the past in their bid to bring down Najib's Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

"I didn't send him to jail (this time) and don't see any reason why I cannot be friendly again with him, especially because we have a common goal, that is the overthrow of the present regime," he said in the interview broadcasted today.

Asked if he had apologised to Anwar, who was deputy prime minister under Mahathir from 1993 to 1998, during their meeting on Sept 5 last year, Mahathir said no.

"No, no, no. I didn't apologise for anything. That was something in the past. We can't be apologising for what happens in the past," he said.

The former Umno president described the meeting, the first since Anwar was fired from the government and as an Umno member in 1998, as "nice".

"It was a nice meeting," he said, admitting that Anwar was first jailed when he was in power and released after he stepped down (during the prime ministership of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2004).

"Now he is in jail not because of me. It's because of the present government. So I have no problem with that," Mahathir said.

In 1998, Mahathir sacked Anwar from his cabinet and later from the ruling party Umno, accusing the then deputy prime minister of being a homosexual and also abusing his authority.

In January 2006, the BBC reported that Anwar was suing Mahathir for his gay slur on two occasions, first in 1998 and again in September 2005.

“Imagine having a gay prime minister. Nobody would be safe,” Mahathir had told reporters in September 2005, adding that he had sacked Anwar, his one time heir-apparent, to prevent mainly-Muslim Malaysia from having a homosexual leader, according to the report.

Meanwhile, referring to Pakatan Harapan, Mahathir said the opposition coalition consisted of people who were once against him, but all had decided to focus on the “very important issue” of overthrowing the current “kleptocratic” government.

“For that, we are prepared to forget the past,” he said.

Pakatan Harapan consists of PKR, DAP, Amanah and PPBM.

During Mahathir’s leadership, Anwar was sentenced to six years in prison for corruption on April 14, 1999, and nine years for sodomy on Aug 8, 2000. The sentences were to be served consecutively.

In the second sodomy case, on Feb 10, 2015, the Federal Court sentenced Anwar to five year’s jail for sodomising his former aide, Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan. Anwar is now serving his jail term in Sungai Buloh prison.

All convictions were criticised by local and international human rights groups as being politically motivated.

Mahathir met Anwar twice in recent months when he showed up during Anwar’s trials at the Kuala Lumpur High Court. On Sept 5 last year they exchanged a handshake and a brief chat, and on Feb 10 they spoke for about 40 minutes.

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