

Anwar was sacked during your rule, Azalina reminds Mahathir
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Umno minister Azalina Othman Said says the former PM's 'frequent U-turns' show the opposition's willingness to barter its principles to fulfil personal interests.

PETALING JAYA: Dr Mahathir Mohamad is impugning himself by claiming that PKR's de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, who is serving a 5-year jail sentence for a sodomy conviction, is the victim of a political vendetta, says Umno supreme council member Azalina Othman Said.

"Has Tun Mahathir forgotten that the expulsion of Anwar Ibrahim from the government was during his own rule in 1998?" Azalina, who is a minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said in a statement today.

"Tun Mahathir's actions in frequently making U-turns also reveal the opposition's actual attitude in willing to trade off their principles because they want to fulfil their personal interests."

She said the allegation by Mahathir, who is now PPBM chairman, was only hurting himself.

Mahathir, who was prime minister from 1981 to 2003, was yesterday reported by The Guardian as saying that Anwar should be released from jail and allowed to contest in parliamentary elections.

He said Anwar was the "victim of a political vendetta" and had been "unfairly treated".

"The decision of the court was obviously influenced by the government and I think the incoming (opposition) government would be able to persuade the king to give a full pardon for Anwar.

"In which case he would be able to participate in politics and become prime minister. I can have no objection to that," Mahathir was quoted as saying.

In September 1998, Anwar was fired from his position as deputy prime minister as well as from Umno where he was deputy president. Mahathir was also Umno president at the time.

Anwar was sentenced to six years in prison for corruption on April 14, 1999, and nine years in prison for sodomy on Aug 8, 2000.

Human rights activists and the opposition heavily criticised the sentences, which were to be served consecutively, as being politically influenced by the Mahathir government.

The Federal Court later overturned the sodomy conviction in September 2004 when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was prime minister.

In April 2009, Abdullah was succeeded by Najib Razak who has remained in power till today.

In the latest case known as "Sodomy 2", Anwar is serving a five-year jail term after losing his appeal at the Federal Court on Feb 10, 2015, to set aside his conviction on a charge of sodomising his former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan in 2008.

Azalina said as Anwar was now being punished under Section 377B of the Penal Code, there was no question of him being a victim of political vendetta this time as alleged by Mahathir.

"Anwar Ibrahim has undergone every process as allowed under the law to defend himself, including presenting his appeal to the Board of Appeals," she said.

She said Mahathir's allegation that there was interference in the decision on Anwar's latest sodomy case directly questioned the freedom and integrity of the judiciary.

"It is also an insult to the country's legal and democratic systems," she said.

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