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## Anifah raps Dr Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman has taken former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to task for attempting to undermine Malaysia in the international media as part of a "personal political vendetta".

Referring to a recent interview given by Dr Mahathir to *The New York Times*, Anifah said it was a "regrettable" act.

"It is irresponsible of any citizen, let alone a former prime minister, to spread lies and distortions about state owned companies — saying, for example, that RM42 billion is missing from Malaysia Development Bhd (IMDB) to create public anxiety — when in fact these are audited debts backed by RM51 billion in assets," he said in an open letter addressed to the United States newspaper last night.

Anifah said the reckless claims had affected market sentiment towards Malaysia.

"Furthermore, it is telling that he continues to mount his attacks, rather than wait for the findings of the enquiries currently being undertaken by Malaysia's central bank, Auditor-General and the parliament's bipartisan Public Accounts Committee.

"This shows that Dr Mahathir is not interested in answers from the appropriate lawful authorities but is using IMDB as an excuse to topple the serving prime minister, Datuk Seri Najib Razak. And all because his personal de-

mands, as Tun Mahdi Whimself has acknowledged, are not being met," he said.

He said Najib, as Malaysia's democratically elected leader, will do what he thinks is right for the nation, and will not allow rule by proxy.

Anifah said Dr Mahathir had told *The New York Times* that Umno "lacks vision and talented people", that it "has become a repository of patronage-seeking politicians", and that members "try to keep out people who are more intelligent than themselves".

"But it was Dr Mahathir who led the party for 22 years. It was he who that, during his time, worked to cultivate 'yes men' and entrenched his position — even introducing a quota system for the Umno presidency to prevent challengers — rather than bringing in talent and strengthening the party.

"It is Najib who democratised the party constitution to make it far easier to challenge him for his job," he said, adding that Dr Mahathir's accusation of Najib's act of "verging on criminal" was outrageous and entirely false.

"It is a measure of the reforms put in place under Najib's administration that Dr Mahathir has the freedom to be so vocally critical of the party and government he once led. But Dr Mahathir is abusing that freedom, and his privileged standing as a former prime minister, to indulge in reckless and baseless personal smears against Najib and his family."