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FOREX LOSSES

'DR M'S U-TURN DUE TO RCI PROBE'

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It's not about the upcoming general election, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR

THE latest U-turn by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his backing of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim are driven by his deep concern relating to the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) set up to investigate into the forex losses during his premiership, and not about the coming general election.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Dr Mahathir was backing Anwar to be prime minister after vilifying him for 20 years in any way he could.

"However, as Dr Mahathir knows well, Anwar cannot legally contest, so this U-turn is not about the coming general election.

"In reality, Dr Mahathir's new appeasement of Anwar is driven by his deep concern relating to the

cabinet's decision to form the RCI to investigate the truth behind Bank Negara's RM30 billion forex losses during his premiership, as detailed in the Special Task Force report.

"Dr Mahathir knows that the RCI findings could lead to criminal prosecution, so he cannot afford to have individuals highly relevant to the case, such as Anwar, testifying against him."

Najib, in a statement, said Dr Mahathir had tried eliminating Anwar from the political scene, including arresting the latter under the now-repealed Internal Security Act, prosecuting and jailing him, and holding a campaign to attack his character.

He said it was ironic that, now, Dr Mahathir needed Anwar, just as he needed Lim Kit Siang, another man he jailed.

He said the reason behind this was Lim's control of DAP, which held the bulk of the opposition seats in Parliament as compared with one under Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), the party that Dr Mahathir chaired.

"Dr Mahathir's crusade is motivated not by national interest, but by selfish personal interest."

Najib said Dr Mahathir was obsessed with saving his family legacy and making his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, prime minister.

"He has no principles and will do anything, including allying with those he jailed, calling for foreign intervention in our sovereign democratic nation, sabotaging our economy, and making 100 U-turns, if so required, to manipulate the minds of the people as a means to achieve his desired end.

"Anwar may fall for this, but I believe the nation will not. Because with only one parliamentary seat, the chairman of PPBM cannot decide who becomes prime minister. It would be grossly undemocratic."

Najib said Dr Mahathir had demanded Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to resign as prime minister, and was demanding Najib's resignation, adding that Dr Mahathir would also demand Najib's successor to resign until his son

became prime minister.

"This time, we will not let him succeed because democracy must prevail, and the interests of the country must come before Mahathir's family.

"Nothing is more important than the needs of the people. The government under my leadership will continue to focus unwaveringly on economic welfare, social well-being and security of Malaysians. Their (the people's) interests must always come first and we will deliver on our promises."

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said Dr Mahathir had "shot himself in the foot" by claiming that Anwar was a victim of political vendetta.

Anwar was sacked from his post as deputy prime minister and jailed during Dr Mahathir's tenure as prime minister.

Dr Mahathir, in a recent interview with *The Guardian* newspaper in London, had reportedly said he had no objection to Anwar becoming prime minister if Pakatan Harapan won in the next

general election.

He had said Anwar should be released from jail, where he was serving a five-year sentence for sodomy, and allowed to contest in the next general election as he was a victim of political vendetta.

Azalina said Dr Mahathir's frequent U-turns reflected the opposition's willingness to sacrifice its principles for the sake of personal gain.

Anwar, 69, was once Dr Mahathir's deputy and close ally, but they were engaged in a bitter dispute in the late 1990s.

After being sacked from the government, Anwar was jailed for the first time after he was convicted of sodomy and corruption.

He was convicted of sodomy for a second time and jailed in 2014.

The conviction bars him from political office and contesting in the coming election, which must be held by next year.

After 18 years of animosity, Anwar and Dr Mahathir buried the hatchet and joined forces under the Pakatan Harapan opposition pact.