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'IT'S JUST TO APPEASE ANWAR'

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Ex-PM is concerned that Anwar will testify against him, says minister

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FORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's latest move in defending his former deputy, jailed opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, was merely a move to appease the latter.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak said Dr Mahathir was worried that the government was investigating Bank Negara Malaysia's foreign exchange (forex) losses in the 1990s.

"Dr Mahathir's main concern is that Anwar will testify against

him and that the truth behind the RM30 billion losses would be revealed.

"This, therefore, is merely a move by Dr Mahathir to appease Anwar and was not made sincerely," he said in his blog post yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, in an interview with *The Guardian* on Thursday, backed Anwar, who was sacked from the government in 1998 and subsequently imprisoned after being found guilty of sodomy.

Dr Mahathir had, during the interview, said Anwar should be released from jail and allowed to contest parliamentary elections, adding that he was unjustly jailed.

Salleh said Dr Mahathir's latest statement was both shocking and comical.

"If Anwar was really unjustly jailed, then apologise for it. In

essence, Mahathir is saying that Anwar was fixed up by a corrupt judiciary and that the judges are dishonest.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

"That alone (is) tantamount to contempt of court and saying so in a UK press interview is nothing short of trying to smear the image of the country."

Anwar is serving a five-year jail term after being convicted of a second sodomy charge.

The forex scandal made headlines again after the *New Straits*

Times published an interview with former Bank Negara assistant governor, Datuk Abdul Murad Khalid, in which he claimed that Bank Negara had suffered forex losses of US\$10 billion in the early 1990s.

Just a few days prior, the media reported about the declassified United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) papers which linked Dr Mahathir's administra-

tion to the Bumiputra Malaysia Finance scandal in the 1980s.

Dr Mahathir has since downplayed the report, saying that it did not directly link himself to the scandal, and was merely a normal information paper for the US government back then.

In **Johor Baru**, Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad said the call for Anwar to be opposition's prime minister candidate appeared to be a regressive stance.

"The opposition has been trying to appoint Anwar as the prime minister since 1999. The world has changed a lot since then, so why do we need to look back.

"How are we, as a country, going to move forward when we continue to look backwards. The country needs to adjust and

move on with what is happening around the world.

"The country continues to be well-managed and administered despite Anwar not being the prime minister, so let's just move forward. I pity the people of Malaysia for having to face this issue again and again," Shahrir said at his Hari Raya open house at SJKC Foon Yew 1.



Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak

Umno deputy Youth chief Senator Khairul Azwan Harun, in a statement, said Dr Mahathir's about-turn was a measure to designate his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, as the next prime minister.

"Enough is enough with these political games. Malaysian youths can no longer waste time entertaining Dr Mahathir's ambitions to protect his dynasty and have Mukhriz as the next prime minister." **Additional reporting by**

Teh Athira Yusof