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ANOTHER U-TURN

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# I'll back Anwar as PM, Dr M says it again

**PUTRAJAYA:** Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday appeared to have made yet another U-turn, this time regarding his former deputy, jailed opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Previously, Dr Mahathir had said, when referring to Anwar, that someone immoral could not be the leader of the country.

When asked about it yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he stood by the statement "at the time", but had now changed his mind.

"I stand by my statement at that time. It depended on the circumstances prevailing at the time. I might change my mind again next year," he said at the Perdana Leadership Foundation.

Dr Mahathir voiced his support for Anwar to be Pakatan Harapan's prime minister candidate, but only "if it is what the public wants".

When asked if he was one of the candidates for prime minister in the opposition pact, Dr Mahathir dismissed the possibility, while at

the same time calling himself a "top dog" in Pakatan Harapan.

"I am one of the leaders, but it is agreed that I am the chairman. I will chair the presidential council. To a certain extent, in the hierarchy... I am a top dog there, *lah*."

"(But) I am a top dog on the outside. The (other) top dogs on the inside will meet and discuss about our national affairs and on how to further enrich my children," he quipped.

Anwar is serving a five-year sentence for sodomising his former aide and is due for release in 2020.

The country's laws prevent him from contesting in an election or holding a political position for five years after his release.

He had been deputy prime minister and heir apparent to Dr Mahathir in the 1990s, until he was unceremoniously kicked out of the government and Umno following allegations of corruption and sexual misconduct.

Dr Mahathir was appointed as chairman of Pakatan Harapan,

working alongside Anwar, the pact's de facto leader.

He also claimed that he was on the same level as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, whom he had criticised since 2014.

"Among the opposition (leaders) I am the equivalent of Najib *lah*... unofficially."

When pressed further on the opposition pact's prime minister-designate, Dr Mahathir said Pakatan Harapan wanted to keep the "people and government very surprised".

"This is part of the election strategy... nothing new."

Dr Mahathir also announced that the Nothing2Hide 2.0 forum, which will be organised by Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's Youth wing, will be held on Aug 13 at Dewan Raja Muda Musa in Shah Alam.

He extended an invitation to Najib and Umno members, saying that the forum would be the best platform for both sides of the political divide to answer questions from the public.