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## Dr M denies backing Anwar, says he can't be PM from jail

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**PETALING JAYA:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has denied supporting Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as the next prime minister as reported by a British daily.

The Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia chairman said Anwar could not become the next prime minister as he needed to be released from jail first.

"If the Opposition wins (the next general election), the new seventh prime minister will have to work to release him. Until then, he cannot be PM," he told reporters after a book launch here on Friday.

However, Dr Mahathir was less certain when queried about Pakatan Harapan's plan to appoint an interim PM while awaiting Anwar's release.

"Well, there has to be an interim prime minister. There is no way he can become PM from jail because he cannot compete (in elections). We did not discuss who will be the interim PM," he said.

Dr Mahathir was interviewed by *The Guardian* when he was in London recently.

The daily quoted him as saying that he would not object to Anwar returning to politics and becoming prime minister if the latter was given a royal pardon.

He also reportedly said that Anwar, who served as his deputy prime minister from 1993 to 1998, had been unfairly treated.

The article published on Thursday also said Dr Mahathir had regretted not allowing Anwar to succeed him.

To this, he said: "I didn't say anything about that. What is past is past. If you talk about the past, then we will have a lot of problems."