

Mahathir says ready to back Anwar as PM

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Politics is full of surprises, the former leader says as he gives his strongest endorsement yet of his one-time deputy.

PUTRAJAYA: Dr Mahathir Mohamad today gave his strongest endorsement yet for his one-time deputy Anwar Ibrahim to be made the prime minister should Pakatan Harapan win the 14th general election.

“I am willing to fully support him if that’s what the people want,” he told reporters at the Perdana Leadership Foundation.

The former prime minister who now chairs the coalition said it was waiting for the right time before announcing the choice of a prime minister, saying it was a strategy using the “element of surprise” at the next polls.

“We will announce the name at a proper time. It can be now, or just before the elections. Or immediately after winning the elections. This is an option,” he said.

Anwar, who is serving a five-year jail sentence over a controversial sodomy conviction, had announced last month that he was not vying for the top post, following disagreements aired over the media over the choice of a prime minister-designate for the four-party coalition.

Mahathir and Anwar were bitter rivals for close to two decades after the latter’s dramatic sacking in 1998. Both men patched up their differences last year and agreed to work together to oppose Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Last week, Anwar was named PH’s de-facto leader while Mahathir was made the chairman, in a move analysts say would pose the greatest challenge to Najib and Barisan Nasional (BN).

But the coalition stopped short of identifying a clear candidate for the prime minister’s post.

Mahathir today said there was nothing to be surprised about over his support for Anwar.

“Nothing new. Before Anwar was against BN. He was against me. I accepted him into Umno.

“Politics full of surprises,” said the PPBM chairman.

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