

## **Dr M: I'm only human, some things did escape my scrutiny**

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PUTRAJAYA, Sept 18 — “If you want to say that I am a perfectionist, yes I admit, but I am also human, sometimes I overlooked (something),” former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into Bank Negara Malaysia’s (BNM) foreign exchange (forex) losses in the early 1980s today.

Dr Mahathir said that in reply to Conducting Officer Datuk Suhaimi Ibrahim, who suggested that Dr Mahathir was a perfectionist and meticulous person who would pay great attention to a problem, but had failed to pay attention to the huge losses suffered by the BNM.

“No matter how careful I am in handling everything, there are things I had overlooked. For example, I appointed the wrong person,” he said without naming the person.

At this juncture, RCI panel member, High Court Judge Datuk Kamaludin Md Said told Dr Mahathir that the issue in question concerned the losses suffered by the BNM.

Kamaludin also asked Dr Mahathir whether he had wrongly appointed the then Finance Minister, to which he answered: “He seemed nice at first, but what he had in mind, I didn’t know.”

To Suhaimi’s question that Dr Mahathir should have given more attention to the BNM losses as it was also reported in the foreign media, the former premier said he did not give attention to foreign media reports as they were keen on criticising him.

“I take note of the reports (on BNM losses) from my officers. I stood by the reports from my officers, including the Finance Minister and the Governor (of BNM),” he said.

Earlier in his witness statement on Tan Sri Clifford Francis Herbert’s claim that he and the then Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had met with Dr Mahathir in his office in early 1993 to report on BNM losses of RM30 billion, Dr Mahathir said he could not recall the amount of RM30 billion being mentioned.

“What I can recall was the amount of RM5 billion being mentioned. This was because when it was brought to my attention, I already knew that the BNM forex losses for the year 1992 was RM5.7 billion as informed to the Cabinet earlier by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, and as I much as I could recall, was also tabled in Parliament.

“What I am sure of is that there was no written document showed or given to me pertaining the matter,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said all problems pertaining to the BNM forex transactions had been tackled by the central bank between 1992 and 1994 by introducing various regulatory measures as well as by formulating the Central Bank of Malaysia Act 2009.

On former BNM governor Tan Sri Jaffar Hussein, Dr Mahathir said Jaffar was personally known as a credible, trustworthy and reasonably prudent person.

He is also known as a strict, straightforward person and I have full confidence in his integrity and transparency, Dr Mahathir said.

“All the forex losses suffered by BNM between 1992 and 1994 cannot tarnish the good deeds and contributions made by Jaffar, who had served tirelessly in the interests of the country,” he said.

He said Jaffar’s move in taking responsibility and stepping down as the BNM governor in 1994 was indeed a prudent decision.

On Anwar’s statement about the Cabinet meetings held on March 30, 1994, and April 6, 1994, Dr Mahathir said as far as he could remember, there were no facts given by Anwar in both meetings that differed from the BNM annual financial report tabled to be Cabinet and in Parliament.

“I strongly believed that since the actual losses suffered by BNM was not identified then, except for the amount stated in the central bank’s annual financial report tabled to the Cabinet and in Parliament, Anwar had not hid from the Cabinet meetings any information given officially to him by the BNM,” he said.

The hearing continues tomorrow.

The RCI is chaired by Petronas chairman Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan.

Other members of the panel are High Court judge Datuk Wira Kamaludin Md Said, Bursa Malaysia chief executive officer Datuk Seri Tajuddin Atan, Special Task Force on Facilitating Businesses co-chairman Tan Sri Saw Choo Boon and Malaysian Institute of Accountants member K. Puspanathan. — Bernama

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