

**Najib: RCI will not probe cause of death**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**January 7, 2011**

A royal commission of inquiry (RCI) has been established to probe whether Teoh Beng Hock's human rights were violated when he was grilled by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

"I promised on July 22, 2009, to set up the RCI. The terms of reference of RCI will be specific - to investigate MACC's investigation procedures and whether it had violated human rights," Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak told a press conference in Putrajaya today.

The announcement comes two days after an inquest failed to determine the cause of Teoh's death.

Najib (left) also said attorney-general (AG) Abdul Gani Patail was dissatisfied with the inquest outcome and was determined to file an application for a review of the inquest outcome.

As such, the cause of Teoh's death will not be included in the royal commission's terms of reference.

Najib said the commission would be given three months to produce a report and will comprise respected individuals from the public.

Asked whether the royal commission's terms of reference would be expanded to look into Teoh's cause of death, Najib said:

"You must realise that we must operate under the law and the law says that an inquest into the death of an individual is up to the coroner's office.

"The AG is not happy with the verdict and wants it to be referred to a higher court for a review.

"So we have to go through the process, but we want to establish this royal commission to ensure that there are no abuses of human rights and to look into the procedures relating to investigations by the MACC," he said.

The commission has three months to complete its report. Under the Investigation Commission Act 1950, a time extension can be sought.

'We empathise with them, but don't get carried away'

He advised Teoh's family and members of the public to be "mindful of the laws" and appealed to the people to not be carried away by their emotions.

"What's important is to uncover the truth and the government wants to know the truth.

"We are working to find out the truth and what really happened," said the prime minister, vowing to keep to his oath to get to the bottom of the matter.

"I hope the family concerned - although we sympathise with their condition (and) we empathise with what they have gone through - will allow for this process to take place, and hopefully, we will be able to establish what really happened," he said.

Asked if he would meet with Teoh's family to fulfil their request to meet with the prime minister before the royal commission is formed, Najib said:

"I can meet with them, but I'm not sure when. What's important is to allow the royal commission to be formed."

### **Open verdict**

On Wednesday, the 18-month-long inquest delivered an open verdict, leaving the Teoh family in anguish over the lack of closure.

Critics have called on the government to establish the commission since the death of the 30-year-old DAP aide on July 16, 2009, the day after an overnight interrogation by Selangor MACC officers at the 14th floor of Plaza Masalam in Shah Alam.

Teoh was found dead about 1.30pm on the fifth floor service landing of the same building.

Soon after his death, Najib heeded the public outcry, saying that a royal panel would be set up once the the inquest was over, but only to examine the MACC's investigative procedures.

Since then, there have been calls for the ambit of the panel to be widened to include the circumstances surrounding Teoh's death.

The arguments for the royal panel have become stronger after coroner Azmil Muntapha Abas concluded that Teoh sustained injuries to his neck prior to the fall.

Najib said he could not assume that if the matter was taken to the High Court, it would provide a more favourable response to Teoh's family, who have been devastated by not knowing the actual cause of his death.

"We cannot preempt what the High Court's review will determine, but I hope it will bring closure to this case.

"(My personal opinion) is it's not important, what's important is that the process of review will take place," he said.

### **Gobind 'disturbed and disappointed'**

In an immediate reaction, Gobind Singh, the lawyer representing Teoh's family at the inquest, said he was "disturbed" and disappointed at the narrow scope of the inquiry.

"Why hold a royal commission now to look into the investigation procedures by the MACC? That aspect should have been looked into long ago. At the end of the day everybody wants to know how Teoh Beng Hock died," he told AFP.

"I think the AG should tell us why is he filing a revision, what is he unhappy about with the verdict?"

The Bar Council also said the terms of the inquiry were too limited.

"If it does not look into the cause of the death then I don't think there will be any closure," said Malaysian Bar president Rangunath Kesavan.

"He died while in custody of the MACC, so they have a responsibility to respond and explain how the death occurred

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/152704>