

Mahathir supports declaration of assets
MalaysiaKini.com
January 23, 2012
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has recommended that those in public office declare their assets but to "an independent body".

"Maybe it will be good to declare to a body which will not make use of it for political purposes," he told reporters at MCA's Chinese New Year open house celebrations in Kuala Lumpur today.

"I think it is enough for it to go through a body which is neutral, and not siding anyone."

He was responding to recent suggestions by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) Advisory Board for the spouses and children of cabinet ministers to declare their assets to the Prime Minister's Office.

Board chairperson Zaitun Zawiyah Puteh had also proposed that a copy of the declaration be given to MACC.

However, the opposition has criticised the MACC for not going further to implement a policy to ensure those in public office declare their assets to the people.

NONEMinister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz (right) had reasoned that such a measure would "endanger" the parties involved.

The de facto law minister had also pointed out that even the assets declaration to MACC is not necessary unless it is upon the prime minister's insistence.

Mahathir shared Nazri's sentiments, adding that by making a public declaration the minister would have to deal with all kinds of "slander".

"We don't want that... people will be focussed on that instead of unity and nation building," he said.

Presently, the members of the federal cabinet only have to declare their assets to the prime minister annually, noted Mahathir.

"I discovered quite a lot of things," said the outspoken former premier jokingly.

Asked to elaborate on the action taken if the assets were found to be accumulated unduly, Mahathir only said: "People who become ministers need to be honest, if they are not honest please resign without being kicked out."