

Report lodged on Dr M's link with disgraced US lobbyist
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PKR today lodged a report with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission on what it described as "misappropriation of funds" by the federal government to pay a lobbyist to boost the country's image abroad.

PKR Balik Pulau MP Yusmadi Yusoff, who lodged the report at the Penang MACC office, claimed the government under ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad paid millions to a lobbyist in America to boost its image in the international arena since 2005.

He alleged that the government had engaged an "extreme" lobbyist, Jack Abramoff, who has been found guilty of illegal activities, to prop-up Malaysia's falling global reputation.

"But since the MACC can only begin to investigate when a report is lodged, it is my responsibility to make the report now," Yusmadi told reporters before going into the MACC office.

"This issue may not have received much attention here but it is well known in America," he added.

Yusmadi was referring to a June 22, 2006, report titled 'Gimme Five: Investigation on Tribal Lobbying Matters', commissioned by the US Senate Committee of Indian Affairs.

The 300-paged report focuses on a two-year investigation into the affairs of Abramoff, who had pleaded guilty to defrauding a number of Native American tribes that had sought his services to establish gambling operations.

The investigation resulted in the discovery of documents relating to the lobbyist's work for the Malaysian government.

It is believed that the payment - made to a bogus think-tank, American International Centre - by the Malaysian Embassy in Washington DC, was for Abramoff's services in organising a meeting between Mahathir and former US president George W Bush in 2002.

In February 2006, when questioned on the matter, Mahathir admitted that US\$1.2 million was paid to organise the meeting but denied the money came from the Malaysian government.

"I understood some people paid a sum of money to lobbyists in America but I do not know who these people were and it was not the Malaysian government," Mahathir (right) was reported as saying in the media.

Renewed interest in the case comes in the wake of criticisms against Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim's statement supporting Israel in a recent interview with Asian Wall Street Journal.

Anwar said his statement supporting the security of Israel was contingent on the creation of an independent Palestine state and respecting the rights of its people, based on the two-state solution.

Anwar's supporters have been going on a campaign to prove the Malaysian government's hypocrisy in condemning the former when it has trade relations with Israel.

Malaysia's foreign policies not strategic

Yusmadi urged the MACC to investigate the case, saying that it was understandable if the government sought foreign advisers to advise it on policy matters.

However, he added, in doing so, the Malaysian government should at no time seek advice through “illegal, dubious or criminal arrangements”.

Yusmadi also criticised the country’s foreign policies as lacking in strategy and attraction, saying they did not benefit Malaysians but were more towards foreigners.

One of the reasons for this, he said, was due to the government’s lack of interest in empowering its own civil service.

“The country has been put in a contentious state due to our disempowered civil service, such that we need to seek advice from foreigners.

“The country’s policies can only be attractive to all if we have competent officers, with good policies, come good reputation,” he added.

Yusmadi noted that under current Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (left), several overseas appointments - special envoys - have been made for BN leaders such as former MCA president Ong Ka Ting (China), former MIC president S Samy Vellu and former Rompin Umno MP Jamaluddin Jarjis (the US).

“Rest assured that if Pakatan Rakyat takes over Putrajaya in the coming general election, we will abolish all these positions, which are a waste of public funds,” he said.

Yusmadi was accompanied by members of pro-PKR NGO Jingga 13, who carried placards with pictures of Mahathir and Bush, and carried them silently outside the MACC building before the report was lodged.

Penang Jingga 13 representative Amizuddin Amat urged the MACC to probe the matter “seriously, dilligently and courageously”.

“If they fail to do so, we might have to make a trip to the US to see if we can dig up more details on this case,” Amizuddin said.

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