

NGO to MACC: Why so long to prosecute Taib?

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An international NGO wants to know why the Malaysian Anti-corruption Commission (MACC) is taking so long over its probe into an alleged land corruption case involving Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud's (below) relatives.

Global Witness, the international anti-corruption watchdog behind a damning video that exposed the matter said in a press release today, the investigation opened in June 2011 is still on-going without any prosecution despite the considerable evidence available.

"Why has the investigation has taken two years and has still not reached any meaningful conclusion?"

The 16-minute video released in March allegedly shows two first cousins of Taib and other business associates explaining the ways in which they abuse and exploit land and logging licences given to them by Taib, at the expense of the indigenous Sarawakians.

The footage was allegedly filmed in secret by a Global Witness investigator posing as a businessperson professing interest in buying land in Sarawak.

Last Saturday the MACC insisted that they were not stalling the investigation and cited vast amounts of documents as a reason the investigation had taken so long.

Huge evidence bank torpedoed stand

However, Global Witness was not in the least impressed by that stand.

"There is a huge bank of evidence that shows that Taib, his family and associates have been systematically abusing his office to turn Sarawak's land into personal profit. So why has there been no conclusion?" it asked.

The international NGO demanded that the authorities immediately require Taib to declare all international assets - including shell companies held in offshore secrecy jurisdictions - of which he and his family are beneficial owners.

"He should also be questioned as to how companies in which members of his family have direct and indirect shareholdings have come to control a vast bank of land for

oil palm under his tenure, and obtain lucrative state assets and contracts that have benefited members of his family."

NONEGlobal Witness said it supports Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Paul Low's (left) ambition to combat graft but stressed that bold institutional reforms should be initiated, including transforming the MACC into a credible and effective anti-corruption institution by granting it powers of prosecution.

It recalled that Low after video was released when still acting as Transparency International Malaysia chapter chairperson, had urged the government to commission a panel of independent external auditors to examine cases of suspected corruption and abuse of power with regard to state resources and land deals.

"Global Witness would support such an audit as an urgent remedial measure, alongside the MACC investigation to prevent abuse of public office in Sarawak and guide reforms."

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