

PMO: Why didn't Aussie press pin Dr M?
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The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has questioned why Australian newspapers have avoided naming Dr Mahathir Mohamad in their reports on an alleged bribery scandal involving Malaysian officials.

In a press statement today, the PMO said Mahathir was the prime minister in 1999 and 2004, when the alleged scandal took place.

"Yet, Fairfax Media chose not to mention Tun Mahathir anywhere in its article," the PMO said.

Yesterday, The Age and Sydney Morning Herald, both owned by the Fairfax Media Group, ran articles claiming that Putrajaya was stonewalling efforts by Australian investigators.

Senior officials from firms working for the Reserve Bank of Australia had been accused of offering bribes to Malaysian middlemen to secure a deal to print polymer currency notes for Malaysia.

Not a coincidence

Australian investigators had sought mutual assistance from Malaysia, but the request was allegedly ignored due to the suspected involvement of top Malaysian officials, according to the reports.

The reports claim that some of the middlemen had links to then prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (photo) and Najib, who was deputy prime minister at the time.

The PMO pointed out that Mahathir was also explicitly named in the suppression order regarding the case by the Australian courts.

"Instead, the entire article, including its headline and photos, focused on and smears Prime Minister Najib.

"It may not be coincidental that Fairfax Media claims to have separate information from 'high-level sources'," said the PMO.

Najib has been under intense scrutiny from several Western news organisations of late, including damning reports by the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal.