

Dr M awarded concessions behind cabinet's back – BN strategist
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BN strategic communication deputy director Eric See-To claimed that former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad had awarded concessions behind the cabinet's back.

He said this in rebutting allegations that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had done nothing about purportedly lopsided toll concessions when he was a minister in Mahathir's cabinet.

See-To, in a statement today, used the award of a 20-year gaming concession for sports betting which was given out by the Finance Ministry four months before Mahathir retired as an example.

Mahathir (*photo*) was at that time also the finance minister.

"The *Wall Street Journal* had **reported** about this several times at that time and has said that Mahathir's successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his cabinet only learned that such a license was awarded the next year after Mahathir had retired.

"As Abdullah was also in the cabinet in the years before Mahathir retired, this means that Mahathir had not brought up the award of this license to the cabinet for discussion and approval.

"This proves that cabinet was not notified of all concession agreements during the time when Mahathir was the prime minister," See-To said.

He said the concession was given at a bargain price of RM25 million for a lucrative industry that could generate an annual revenue of RM1 billion.

"The quiet award of the 20 years gambling license by Mahathir to one of his closest friend proves that under Mahathir, not all concession agreements awarded by the government are discussed in the cabinet."

Furthermore, See-To said toll concessions had never come under Najib's purview when he was a minister under Mahathir's government.

"While it was true that Najib (*photo*) has been a cabinet minister since the 1980s, after Mahathir appointed him culture, youth and sports minister in 1986 and later on as education minister and then defence minister, he was never in the Finance Ministry, Works Ministry or made the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) minister.

"Toll concession agreements are typically negotiated under the EPU which reports directly to the prime minister with inputs from the Finance Ministry - whom Daim Zainuddin, Anwar Ibrahim and Mahathir himself headed."

See-To also claimed that the gambling concession was not the only instance that Mahathir had made decisions without the cabinet's knowledge.

He questioned whether the cabinet was notified when the Finance Ministry wrote a letter to Telekom Malaysia on Oct 7, 2003, less than two months before Mahathir retired, to award an RM214.2 million three-year supply contract via direct negotiations to a company owned by his son Mukhriz.

"Perhaps Mukhriz would like to clarify?" he said.

Earlier today, former *New Straits Times* group editor Mustapha Kamil Mohd Janor **questioned** Najib's sudden commitment to abolish tolls, pointing out that he had not expressed such a stance when the concessions were signed.

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