

Asset declaration – Blast from the past

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Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced yesterday that all Pakatan Harapan lawmakers must declare their assets to MACC.

However, he was concerned about making the information public, saying the government is considering how much of this information can be revealed.

According to Mahathir, since the declaration would also involve the lawmakers' families, their privacy could be compromised.

In 2012, former Umno minister Nazri Abdul Aziz expressed a similar stand, arguing that ministers and their families could become targets for robbers if their assets were made public.

This prompted Malaysiakini readers to rebuke Nazri, saying that ministers ran the risk of landing behind bars if such information was revealed.

Back then, then-Penang chief minister Lim Guan Eng had expressed disappointment with MACC for not supporting the public declaration of assets for

ministers.

"I understand there may be security risks if family members of office-bearers declare their assets to the public, but at least the office-bearers themselves should do so," he had said.

When he was the Penang chief minister, Lim, along with his state excos, had declared their assets to the public three times over the past seven years.

The last time they declared their assets publicly was in early April this year.

'Declaration after taking Putrajaya'

Fast-forward to March 2018.

When the NGO Invoke invited Harapan lawmakers to make public their assets, DAP lawmaker Tony Pua had said the party's elected representatives would do so when they become ministers or state excos.

"That is DAP's stand," Pua had said.

In 2004, DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang had accepted then Umno deputy minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's challenge for DAP and opposition leaders to declare their assets to the public.

“I accept Zahid's challenge that DAP leaders publicly declare our assets – provided that within two weeks of our public asset declaration, all cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, parliamentary secretaries, mentris besar, chief ministers, MPs and state assemblypersons publicly declare their assets and those of their next-of-kin to be subject to public scrutiny and accountability,” he had said.

A year earlier, Lim took then-Umno vice-president and current Home Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to task for opposing the suggestion that election laws to be amended to require all candidates, whether from ruling or opposition parties, to publicly declare their assets.

“Instead of proposing that any declaration of asset by candidates should be an internal Umno affair, he (Muhyiddin) should be leading a campaign for a change to the election law in the September Parliament to require all candidates to publicly declare their assets to usher in a new era of clean, honest and uncorrupt politics,” he had said.

Anwar echoes call

In 2013, the late Karpal Singh, who was DAP chairperson, said all PKR and PAS elected representatives should have their assets made known to the public.

Karpal said he would urge PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim and PAS president

Abdul Hadi Awang to instruct their party representatives to declare their assets.

PAS was then a member of Harapan's predecessor Pakatan Rakyat.

After the massive haul of cash and jewellery in relation to the 1MDB probe from residences linked to former premier Najib Abdul Razak last month, Anwar urged all Harapan cabinet ministers to declare their assets.

Just after their earlier fallout, Mahathir said in 1999 that he has proof of the acquisition of properties and the huge contracts secured by cronies of Anwar.

The then-prime minister said that his knowledge of the matter was based on asset declaration forms and the list of contractors awarded huge projects.

"I knew their position. For example, Anwar's former political secretary, secretaries...we know from their declaration of assets,

"A crony tutored by Anwar to topple me, I discovered, has over RM230 million in cash," he had said.

Anwar and Mahathir's critics, on the other hand, had constantly accused the premier of enriching his children using his position and government contracts.

Even in the run-up to the May 9 general election, there were calls for the MACC to investigate Mahathir and his children's assets.

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