

Call for a royal commission, PAS veep dares Tajuddin
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Former MAS chairperson Tajudin Ramli should demand for a royal commission of inquiry into the RM8 billion losses suffered by the national airline during his tenure if he has nothing to hide.

Saying this today, PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub argued that if Tajudin feels he has been wrongly blamed for the losses, he should call for a royal commission "to clear his name".

Such a royal commission is necessary in this case as it could rope in the involvement of the police's Commercial Crimes Investigation Department (CCID), the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and MAS.

"People say that a Royal Commission is a waste of time, but just like with the Anwar (Ibrahim) trial and the (VK) Lingam video, it can reveal to the public who were involved in the case... this is important if we want to save the people's money in the future," he said.

In 2002, MAS lodged its first of a series of police reports against Tajudin, who was executive chairman from 1994 to 2001, for causing the national carrier more than RM8 billion in losses.

The national airline also filed several reports with the MACC, with its latest report filed in May last year citing Tajudin's move to relocate MAS' cargo operations in Amsterdam and Frankfurt to a single hub in Hahn, Germany, as the single biggest loss suffered under him.

The new hub operation incurred monthly losses of between RM10 million to RM16 million before it was terminated and the government took over control of MAS in 2001.

In the deal, it was claimed that MAS was forced to enter into a disadvantageous aircraft lease contract with a company, which was later discovered to be under the control of Tajudin's family.

The subsequent termination of the deal lead to a RM300 million arbitration claim against MAS by the said company.

MAS also claimed in its latest MACC report that attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail was reluctant to prosecute Tajudin despite assurances by the then-CCID chief Ramli Yusoff in 2007 that they had identified several offences related to the case.

Both MAS and Tajudin have filed suits against each other in relation to the case, with MAS in 2005 claiming over RM174 million from Tajudin and several other former senior MAS officials for "various breaches of fiduciary and statutory duties and for defrauding MAS in several related-party transactions".

Tajudin on the other hand filed a counter-suit of RM500 million against the airline two weeks ago, for defamation by the action of MAS in making a report against him to the MACC.

Multi-pronged investigation needed

Salahuddin, who is also a member of the MACC's special committee, added that he has sent in an official letter to both the MACC and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) asking for both institutions to conduct their own probes into Tajudin's case.

He stressed that it is the responsibility of every member of the MACC special committee, the PAC and Parliament to seek out the truth in this issue as it is a "very high profile case".

Salahuddin said he will also raise this issue when Parliament reconvenes on Oct 11 and will send out two more letters to another two institutions next week, though he declined to identify them, saying he will reveal their identities next week.

In the same breath, Salahuddin queried Dr Mahathir Mohamad for allowing such mismanagement and massive losses during his tenure as prime minister.

"This happened during the era of Mahathir. Why is he quiet on this issue? Is it that he does not know anything about it?"

"He shouldn't say that Malays will lose power if Pakatan Rakyat takes over, because here we have a case of Malays cheating... is Mahathir protecting these kind of Malays?" he said.

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