

Charge Dr Mahathir for scuttling ACA probe
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Activists and opposition leaders today piled on the pressure for former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad to be charged in court for abuse of power during his 22-year reign. MCPX

Param Cumaraswamy, former UN special rapporteur on judicial independence, this week publicly urged the government to act against Mahathir based on testimony by the anti-corruption watchdog.

"Mahathir must be charged. He must be held accountable," he told AFP today.

Param said that during the corruption trial of former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim, the former anti-corruption agency head Shafee Yahya told the court that Mahathir ordered him to close a 2000 probe into a top government official.

"From Shafee's evidence in court, Mahathir virtually scuttled the investigations," Param said.

Legal experts said abuse of power is a criminal act carrying a penalty of 14 years imprisonment.

Kit Siang: He should be probed

Anwar, who led a three-party opposition alliance to stunning gains in March 8 general elections, was sacked in 1998 and sentenced to jail after being convicted of ordering police to cover up alleged sexual misconduct.

Since the elections, which saw the ruling coalition lose a third of parliamentary seats and five states, Mahathir has shot back into the headlines with a campaign to topple his successor Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Lim Kit Siang of the opposition DAP said there should be an inquiry into alleged abuses of power during Mahathir's tenure which he said had undermined institutions like the judiciary.

"Based on Shafee's evidence, Mahathir should be probed," he told AFP.

Ezam Mohamad Nor, chairman of the anti-corruption group Gerak, also joined the calls for an inquiry.

"Abdullah should make sure the country's anti-corruption watchdog and the judiciary are independent. If there is enough evidence, Mahathir should be charged," he said.

Abdullah was Mahathir's hand-picked successor when he stepped down in 2003, but after the new leader dumped several of his pet projects he began launching accusations of economic mismanagement, nepotism and corruption.