

Mahathir: Lingam tape used for 'blackmail'
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has today alleged that the controversial Lingam tape was made for the purpose of blackmail.
MCPX

"I have always emphasised - whenever someone makes such secret recordings, the intention is to blackmail and I'm afraid that the government had made successful a blackmail attempt," said Mahathir.

mahathir hulu langat 120408 press conference Mahathir said this when ask to comment on the submission of the Lingam Tape royal commission report which was submitted by the five-member panel to the King on Friday.

The government had set up the commission late last year to investigate a video clip purportedly depicting prominent lawyer VK Lingam brokering judicial appoints with a top judge.

The grainy 14-minute clip, made public last September, depicted lawyer VK Lingam having a phone conversation on the appointment of friendly judges with ex-chief justice Ahmad Fairuz Sheikh Abdul Halim.

The video was secretly taped by businessman Loh Mui Fah's son, Gwo Burne, who was recently elected member of parliament for Kelana Jaya in Selangor.

This is not the first time that Mahathir had made the allegation. In a letter to Malaysiakini last month, he wrote:

"As to the video taping of VK Lingam, one should ask why this is done. Isn't it because of the intention to blackmail?"

Mahathir also revealed that he had read an extract of the Lingam Tape royal commission report and claimed that there were attempts made to incriminate him in the scandal.

"Although there is no direct connection with me, if you read between the lines, it is suggested that the (then) prime minister is biased and things like that. This kind of thing would keep going on. This is done by Anwar.

look east forum crowd"Anwar purposely got this tape and exposed it because he wanted to undermine Lingam's credibility, who happens to be my lawyer. He is defending me against Anwar," Mahathir told reporters after a function in Shah Alam today.

Mahathir said Anwar had to "great success" damaged Lingam's credibility and that the lawyer can now no longer defend the former premier in the RM100 million defamation suit.

Tampering evidence

Mahathir added that a flaw during the commission hearing was the failure to raise the issue

of Anwar's "tampering" with the video clip.

"He did not give the full tape at one go. He released the tape in two parts. That constitutes as tampering with evidence. We don't know what he kept behind and other small tapes he has. This will be used in time to blackmail.

"Of course, the moment I say this, Anwar will be thinking: 'Ahh... I must sue him for another RM100 million'. If I'm found guilty, I'll go to jail if I have to. If I go bankrupt, then I'll go bankrupt. It's alright," added Mahathir.

On Umno vice-president Muhiyiddin Yassin's intention to contest for either one of the top two party positions, Mahathir said that it was an encouraging sign, but other leaders should also speak up against the party leadership.

"I think that others should also express their views (to the party leadership) at the moment he is the only one willing to speak his mind," he said.

According to The Star today, Muhiyiddin also hit out at the party's quota ruling which stipulates high number of nominations needed from Umno's 191 divisions in order to contest for top party posts.

Umno suppose to be democratic

Ask for his message to Umno members in conjunction with Umno's 62nd anniversary, Mahathir said that the party must remember that its founding principles were based on the concept of democracy.

He reiterated his position that there are intense efforts made by the party leaders to stop members from holding extraordinary general meetings and calls for the 30 percent quota ruling to contest for party presidency be scrapped.

Mahathir stressed that if the 30 percent quota rule is not amended before the party polls this year end, current Umno president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would be the sole candidate nominated for the post.

After the press conference, Mahathir's aide Sufi Yusoff told Malaysiakini that Mahathir could not attend the anniversary bash at Kuala Lumpur today because the invitation had come too late.

"The letter was dated May 5 and we only received it on Thursday. By then, Mahathir had already committed to other functions," he said.

On the ongoing spat between veteran lawyer Karpal Singh and the Kelantan and Perak royalty, Mahathir said that it is up to the court of law to determine if Karpal had said anything seditious or whether he had insulted the sultan.

"But if it is seditious, we should make clear, that if you say this thing like in Thailand, against the King, that is a crime. But here in Malaysia, there is no such position,"

Below are excerpts from the wide-ranging 16-minute interview:

What are your views on the Penang Syariah Court's recent decision to allow a

Chinese-convert to renounce Islam?

You have to go back to the basic teachings of the religion. There are two different things. One is the teachings of religion and one is the customs of the place.

In Malaysia, we do certain things that in certain things are not acceptable in other countries, likewise, in other countries they do certain things that are not acceptable here [...]

This interpretation of Islam, when you have a problem, you have to go back and refer to the actual teachings of the religion - whether (or not) a (Muslim) man or woman is allowed to revert back to (their original) religion.

Are you against the decision?

I'm not against the decision. I'm saying that it has to be done according to the teachings. What is done in Malaysia is not because Islam requires it, but because local customs require it.

I know of a president of a Muslim country whose wife was a Catholic and his children are brought up as Muslims. That is the requirement of Islam.

Of course, Catholics are also required to bring up their children as such. There is a conflict there, I don't know how they resolved it. But they are a little more tolerant compared to us.

On whether restructuring subsidies was a way to tackle the food crisis

It is not a question of restructuring subsidies. If there is a shortage of food, you must overcome the shortage, not the price. How do you overcome the shortage? That is something that the government must study very carefully.

These are things that the government must not just make a popular announcement like giving more subsidies. They must tell how they want to overcome the shortage.

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