

PM has to clear his name, says Dr Mahathir
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Najib Abdul Razak "has to clear his name" over the allegations of corruption and links with to the Altantuya Shaariibuu murder.

He however accused the foreign media of "demonising" new prime minister by raising such allegations, which continue to circulate despite the lack of any evidence linking Najib with wrongdoing.

"Najib can expect to hear more of this kind of demonisation from the foreign press but it is what Malaysians think that counts. It is with them that Najib has to clear his name," said Mahathir in a blog posting.

Najib was sworn in earlier this month after his predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was forced to stand down, partly due to relentless criticism from Mahathir, who led the country for two decades until 2003.

Najib has hit out at accusations that he will be a hardline leader and has been forced to deny having an affair with 28-year-old Mongolian woman Altantuya, who was murdered in 2006.

altantuya murder case publish on french newspaper la liberation 050309"The Western press launched a concerted effort to demonise the new prime minister. From France to Britain to Australia, the articles are identical and carried the same message," lamented Mahathir.

"The incoming PM is said to be corrupt and involved in a murder case. The Australian writer says Malaysia is a 'pariah' nation. I cannot believe that this demonisation by so many at the same time is a coincidence."

The foreign press was a popular target with Mahathir when he was in power - an era of hardline rule, including the detention of political opponents, which some commentators say Najib will replicate.

Define 'Mahathirism'

The veteran leader complained that allegations of a return to "Mahathirism" implied he had been "a dictator who detained for no reason, manipulated the judiciary, controlled the press etc".

"As the person concerned I will leave it to Malaysians to judge and to define 'Mahathirism'. They are the constituents which Najib should care about. The foreign press has an agenda of their own," he added.

The new premier served as Abdullah's deputy for six years before taking the helm, one year after disastrous general elections in which voters punished Abdullah for failing to implement promised reforms.

Najib has repeatedly denied any involvement in the death of Altantuya, the lover of his close aide Abdul Razak Baginda who was acquitted of abetting her murder.

Two police officers have been sentenced to hang for the grisly slaying of the young woman, whose remains were blown up with military-grade explosives in a jungle clearing.

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