

**Mahathir book 'pending approval' by Home Ministry**  
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A book containing unflattering claims about Dr Mahathir Mohamad's tenure as premier is in the hands of the Home Ministry, pending approval for distribution.

This was confirmed today by the Customs Department, which reportedly had held up the 800 copies for the past three weeks in Port Klang.

An official, however, clarified that the books are at the Home Ministry's office in Port Klang.

When contacted, a ministry official corroborated this, saying that "one copy (has been) sent to our headquarters in Putrajaya for approval (for distribution)".

However, she was unable to provide further details on the status of the book, while the official in charge was said to be at a meeting and could not be reached for comment.

The book, *'Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times'*, is written by former *Asian Wall Street Journal* managing editor Barry Wain.

It is described as a warts-and-all, critical but fair account of Mahathir's 22 years in power.

Wain wrote that Malaysia squandered an estimated RM100 billion due to financial scandals during Mahathir's tenure, adding that direct financial losses amounted to about RM50 billion.

This doubled once the invisible costs, such as unrecorded write-offs, were taken into account.

The total loss was equivalent to US\$40 billion at then prevailing exchange rates.

Author not fazed

Irked by the allegations, Mahathir wrote in a blog posting yesterday that the book should be released immediately as he is "not in need of government protection".

He also said he welcomes DAP leader Lim Kit Siang's call for a royal commission to probe the allegations.

"Depending on the result of the commission, I reserve the right to sue Wain, Lim and Malaysiakini.com for libel for a sum to be disclosed later," Mahathir said.

Wain, when contacted via e-mail, was unfazed by the threat, saying he welcomes Mahathir's support for immediate release of the book.

"If the 800 copies of the book being held by the government are cleared for sale, Malaysians can judge for themselves my 363-page assessment of Mahathir's political career," he said.

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