

'Maverick' defends himself, attacks author
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In his latest blog posting, Dr Mahathir Mohamad defends himself against the charges contained in a new book about him while taking a swipe at its author Barry Wain and his favorite target, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Mahathir noted that Wain, who was formerly with the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Asia Week*, is currently with the Singaporean think-tank, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Alluding that the author might be too yellow to write about Singapore leaders, the 84-year-old ex-PM said: "He knows that if he writes anything against them, he would be dragged to the courts, sued and forced to pay huge indemnity."

"His colleagues have all been found guilty of defamation when they wrote something that was not approved by Singapore leaders. There has never been a libel suit by Singaporean leaders which has been thrown out by the courts.

"It is safe for journalists to impute all kinds of misbehaviour by Malaysian leaders. There have been many cases where the courts have found in favour of the journalists," he added.

'We did not lose even RM10 bil'

While acknowledging that the government did lose money over the purchase of tin being sold by speculators, Bank Negara's trading in foreign currencies and the Bank Bumiputera debacle in Hong Kong, Mahathir however denied that the losses amounted to even RM10 billion, let alone RM100 billion.

"If we had lost RM100 billion, the government would be in deep trouble. But although we did have poor growth during certain years, the government never failed to meet all financial commitments including the servicing of loans. In fact we had enough money to prepay loans.

"The projects of course cost a lot of money. But the projects can be seen by the people. Penang bridge, Twin Towers, KL Tower, KL International Airport, North Port and West Port in Klang, commuter train, LRT and monorail, numerous expressways all over the country, electrification and double tracking, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, Langkawi development, Proton, Modenas, Silterra chip manufacturing plant, cement plants etc," he said.

"However, I don't think Barry Wain was referring to these projects when he said I burned RM100 billion of government money," he added.

In his book titled, '*Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times*', Wain wrote that the former premier had 'burned' RM100 billion on corruption and grandiose projects during his 22-year reign

Petronas profits and empty corridors

Turning the heat on his successor's administration, Mahathir said the five years of Abdullah's regime saw unprecedented profits by Petronas due to the high price of oil.

"In my 22 years, Petronas paid the government RM126 billion. Petronas paid the

government of Abdullah, a total of RM270 billion in five years.

"How was this huge sum spent? There are only empty corridors everywhere," he added.

Mahathir said the public has a right to know how the RM270 billion in five years was spent.

"What projects have been financed by it. Why do we have to borrow money from China to build the second Penang bridge?" he asked.

"I know every effort was made to find whether I had misused government money. Failing to find anything, the Abdullah government set up a royal commission and accused me of being influenced by others in the choice of judges.

"I have a right to clear my name. Abdullah also has a right to clear his name," he added.

Mahathir said the government should cooperate and open all its books and there should be no cover-up.

"The (current) government is committed to transparency. It should demonstrate that it keeps its promises," he added.

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