

Watchdog backs probe on Dr M, Pak Lah
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The call for a royal commission to investigate claims that two former prime ministers had squandered hundreds of billions of ringgit during their tenure has received the backing of an anti-corruption watchdog.

Both Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, should be subjected to the investigations to restore credibility to the government, said Gerak chairperson Mohd Nazree Mohd Yunus.

"If these claims are not investigated, Gerak is concerned that the incidence of irregularities and corruption will be common practice in the future among national leaders, said Nazree in a statement issued today.

While integrity in the management of the country's resources was crucial to the stability of the economy, the trust that foreign investors have towards the economy would also erode if political figures were allowed to get away with corruption and mismanagement, he added.

"If national resources such as petroleum and other natural resources are not managed with integrity, it is likely that our deteriorating economy will take a turn for the worst as a result of mega-scale corruption."

Nazree's statement come on the heels of a call by opposition stalwart Lim Kit Siang for a royal commission of inquiry to be set up to look into allegations that Mahathir had squandered RM100 billion during his 22 years as premier through grandiose projects and corruption.

The allegations were contained in a book penned by former Asian Wall Street Journal managing editor Barry Wain entitled 'Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times'.

Mahathir: Bring it on

In a posting in his Chedet blog, Mahathir said he welcomed Lim's suggestion for the government to set up a royal commission to probe him.

At the same time, he said he "reserved the right" to sue Wain, Lim and Malaysiakini for defamation.

Mahathir added that the scope of the royal commission should be widened to look into the tenure of his successor-turned-nemesis Abdullah.

Such a probe should include how RM270 billion of Petronas' money paid to the government during Abdullah's five-year term was spent and how much money was lost due to the cancellation of the crooked bridge to Singapore, said Mahathir.

While acknowledging that the government did lose money over projects embarked on during his tenure, 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 Home Ministry stated last week that it was in the process of determining whether Wain's 'Malaysian Maverick' would affect peace and stability in the country.

The ministry has 60 days to make a decision as to whether the book could be sold in Malaysia.

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