

MALAY MAIL

DATE: 11 / 1 / 2010

# TO BAN OR NOT TO BAN

Political leaders hope govt  
will release book on Dr M

By G. PRAKASH

[prakash@mmail.com.my](mailto:prakash@mmail.com.my)

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Leaders on both sides of the political divide hope the Home Ministry will not ban the book *Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times* unless it is really necessary.

Datuk Seri Ong Ka Chuan, the Tapah division MCA chairman Tanjung Malim MP, suggested the ministry only ban the book if it was something that could cause controversy.

"Sometimes even in an advanced country, the government would decide to restrict certain publications, in the interest of the public."

Cheras Umno division chief Senator Datuk Wira Syed Ali Al-Habshee said: "We are living in a globalised modern world. Just like there are borderless

governments, there is also free flow of information brought about by the Internet. Thus people will read the book whether or not it's banned by the government."

Syed Ali said Malaysians **were** smart enough to analyse what they read and "**we** must encourage critical thinking and healthy debate".

He, however, questioned the intention of the book's author Barry Wain.

"The author's intention of writing the book is highly suspicious. His writing is partial and makes the book look less credible."

Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) director of strategy Tian Chua had a different take on the issue. Both agreed that the book should be allowed to circulate and its up to the public to judge it.

"If the government decides to ban the book, I think it will be

a step backwards as it will be ineffective in a borderless world where information flows freely," said Lim.

"Even if the book has controversial points or issues, it is up to the public to analyse it. If the government wants to explain something in the book, it can do so. They should not ban the book as the public will somehow be able to obtain it even if its banned."

Tian Chua said: "There have been many other controversial books in the past and this one is no different. Besides, even Dr Mahathir wants it to be released and has said that he does not need any protection."

On Dec 24, it was reported that the book on Dr Mahathir was withheld by the Port Klang branch of the Home Ministry's Quran Publication Control and Text Division.

The book takes a critical look at how Dr Mahathir led Malaysia as prime minister from 1981 to 2003. The book credits the former premier with Malaysia's economic growth but also blames him for losses of RM100 billion during his tenure.

This led to DAP veteran leader Lim Kit Siang calling on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate Dr Mahathir over allegations in the book.

In his blog, Dr Mahathir welcomed the suggestion, saying the

commission should not be confined to one prime minister alone but should also look-into Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's tenure as prime minister.

