

Don't ban book on Dr M, say Pas veeps

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KUALA LUMPUR: Pas leaders were divided regarding the book *Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times*.

Party vice-president Datuk Mahfuz Omar said there was no reason for the Home Ministry to ban the book even if the contents were controversial as the book merely contained information.

"We must understand that Dr Mahathir himself said he had no problems with the book being released," he said.

"He also made a fair call when he said that the dealings of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should also be investigated (when he was prime minister) in the event a Royal Commission of Inquiry is set up to investigate Dr Mahathir based on allegations in the book."

Mahfuz also said that if the Home Ministry still wanted to ban the book, then there could be a "hidden agenda" involved.

"Maybe they don't want the public to find out about certain things and they are also worried that if a Royal Commission of Inquiry is set up, other political figures could be dragged in as well."

Another Pas vice-president, Salahuddin Ayub, also said the book should not be banned.

"I think it will be a step backwards. Everyone has the right to obtain information. Furthermore, there have been cases in the past when we have had controversial books being allowed in the country and the position should be the same in this case," Salahuddin said.

Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Mahmood Adam said the ministry was still studying the book and a decision has yet to be made on whether the book would be released here.

It was reported last month 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.

