

PKR unhappy with Sarbaini verdict, wants royal probe
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 27 — PKR is not satisfied with yesterday's inquest verdict on senior Customs officer Ahmad Sarbaini Mohamad's death and wants the government set up a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) to conduct another probe into his fatal fall.

In a statement, PKR vice-president N. Surendran said the coroner's verdict that Ahmad Sarbaini's death was by "misadventure" was "unbelievable, unacceptable and inconsistent with the full facts of the case".

Surendran insisted that the government had to take the blame for failing to provide real answers on how the Customs officer fell to his death, saying that this was not the first such incident to occur under the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) watch.

"It beggars belief that having voluntarily gone to the MACC's Cheras office, Sarbaini would then try to leave by crawling out the third-floor window.

"There is also no explanation as to how and why 22 hours of crucial CCTV footage was erased, which covered the period during which he died," he said.

Surendran said an RCI must be formed despite the verdict and its terms of reference should be on MACC's operating procedures, recruitment and training methods and should suggest recommendations for reforms.

He also criticised the MACC's conduct during the inquest, saying the agency had acted like a "private individual" desperately attempting to clear its name.

"The MACC even went to the extent of hiring Umno-linked lawyer Shafee Abdullah to defend them during the inquest," he said.

He said the agency's priority should have been to uncover the truth, ensure punishment on those responsible and institute reforms to improve public confidence.

MACC, Surendran lamented, had behaved in a similar fashion during the investigation into the death of DAP political aide Teoh Beng Hock who had also died while under its watch.

"Evidence was led that Sarbaini had allegedly taken bribes, although he was no longer able to answer the charge or defend himself... this was disgraceful and unimportant to the inquiry into how he met his death," he said.

In his verdict yesterday, coroner Aizatul Akmad Maharani found that Ahmad Sarbaini, 56, a Customs assistant director, fell nine metres to his death by accident while trying to climb back into the third-floor pantry in the MACC's Cheras office on April 6.

He ruled out suicide but also rejected elements of foul play, saying only that one MACC officer — assistant superintendent Kamal Awang Besar — was negligent for abandoning the Customs man who was a witness in a high-profile raid on the department in March this year.

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