

**Global corruption watchdog demands MACC act on Taib
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An International corruption watchdog has slammed the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) for its delay in wrapping up the probe into the alleged corrupt practices of Sarawak's Chief Minister Tan Sri Taib Mahmud.

Global Witness noted that the probe began in 2011 and yet no charges had been brought against Taib.

It wants the MACC to get Taib to declare all his offshore assets, including those held by family members.

Global Witness came to prominence when it released a video tape showing recordings of conversations between its private investigators and two of Taib's cousins. Datuk Paul Low, who was then chairman of Transparency International Malaysia, had urged the Government to immediately commission a panel of independent and reputable external auditors to examine and identify cases of suspected corruption and abuse of public office with regard to state resources and land deals.

GW commended Low whose anti-corruption ambitions include combating graft and improving transparency.

It is holding him to that promise as Low is now Minister in Prime Minister's Department in charge of the implementation of transparency in the government.

"The investigations began in June 2011 and despite the considerable evidence available, no charge has been brought against the powerful chief minister." GW urged the MACC to immediately ask Taib to declare all international assets - including companies held in offshore jurisdictions, of which he and his family are beneficial owners.

"He should also be questioned how companies belonging to his family are now controlling a vast bank of land for oil palm plantations," said the watchdog.

"GW would support such an audit as an urgent remedial measure alongside the MACC investigation to prevent abuse of public office in Sarawak." MACC has a 10-men task force for the probe and said it was receiving help from the A-G's Chambers as an additional measure.

On Tuesday, Bandar Kuching MP Chong Chieng Jen presented in Parliament a list of 24 plots of land worth about RM1 billion allegedly acquired by the family in the timber-rich state.

Taib had allegedly acquired the land from the state for a fraction of its market value through several companies owned by his immediate family. MACC had then approached Chong a day later to ask him for the documents.

Taib, who has been in office for 32 years, has long been in the centre of controversy following allegations of abuse of power.

The powerful chief minister, however, had dismissed the allegations, calling the MACC

"naughty", while maintaining that he would not be cooperating with them for not being upfront with him. - July 5, 2013.

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