

## **Is stealing allowed when election nears, Dr M asks MACC**

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**The former prime minister questions the anti-graft body for saying it will not target politicians for now.**

PUTRAJAYA: Dr Mahathir Mohamad today took to task the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) for saying that it was not going after corrupt politicians out of fear that political parties would use its actions as part of the general election campaign.

“So if you are a politician who stole money, it’s allowed? The others will face action because they are not joining the elections?” the PPBM chairman asked in an exclusive interview with FMT at his office in Putrajaya today.

“So the chief secretary and others cannot steal. But politicians can. Then why the action against the Johor politician, but not against the politician in the heart of KL,” he asked, believed to be in reference to the arrest and charging of a Johor exco over a land deal recently.

“If this is not double standards, then I don’t know what is,” said the former prime minister.

Yesterday, MACC chief commissioner Dzul kifli Ahmad said the commission, which in recent weeks has charged scores of civil servants with corruption, did not want to act against politicians at the moment as it could be used as campaign fodder.

But Dzul kifli warned political parties to only choose “clean” people as candidates.

“If this is not done, don’t blame us if we come knocking on their doors after GE14.

“I don’t make empty promises or populist statements. I have only one word for those who are corrupt – wait,” he told *Mingguan Malaysia* in an interview Sunday.

Mahathir said despite getting more powers to fight corruption, there had been a spike in the number of public servants being involved in it.

“The theft of government funds now runs in the millions. Government officers steal, so do elected representatives,” he said.

Mahathir said despite some being caught with cash worth millions of ringgit including one which took anti-graft officers “18 days just to count the cash”, it was announced that “there was no case”.

“All the reports to MACC, by Bank Negara, from the auditor-general, all these should be brought to the court to judge whether there had been theft committed,” he said.

The former prime minister was earlier asked if he now felt that Abdullah Badawi, who took over from him in 2003 was better than Najib Razak.

He said while it was true that MACC, which was established during Abdullah’s rule, had emboldened the anti-corruption drive, the commission had been silent to act on Prime Minister Najib Razak, referring to the investigation into allegations that the Umno president received RM2.6 billion of money from entitites linked to troubled state firm 1MDB.

Najib had said the money was a donation for Umno from the Saudi royal family.

Last year, in the middle of an investigation involving MACC and other government agencies, Attorney-General Apandi Ali cleared Najib of any criminal offence, saying the money was not a form of bribery.

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