

Lawyer hopes Mahathir will testify at RCI into forex losses

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By V Anbalagan

Mohamed Haniff Khatri Abdulla says rules of natural justice must be followed and former PM Mahathir Mohamad must be heard.

PETALING JAYA: Dr Mahathir Mohamad's lawyer hopes the former prime minister will be called to testify at the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into the losses suffered by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) due to foreign exchange (forex) trading in the 1990s.

"It must be stressed that Dr Mahathir was not called to appear before the Special Task Force to investigate the losses," Mohamed Haniff Khatri Abdulla said.

Among those who appeared before the task force were Nor Mohamed Yakcop, the man who resigned from BNM after the forex losses became public, former finance minister Anwar Ibrahim and ex-opposition leader Lim Kit Siang.

Mahathir was the prime minister when the alleged scandal took place.

In a Facebook post, Haniff, who now represents Mahathir in all civil cases, said anyone who was accused of causing financial losses should be called before the RCI.

"The rules of natural justice that include the right to be heard must be given to them," he said.

He said Mahathir had repeatedly stated that he was prepared to appear before any legally constituted tribunal to answer any allegation.

Haniff said it was ironic that the Najib Razak-led Cabinet was more concerned about the forex losses when the entire world was puzzled as to why Malaysian law enforcement agencies refused to act on the 1MDB scandal.

Yesterday the Prime Minister's Office said the Cabinet had agreed to set up the RCI as there was sufficient evidence to justify further investigation into the matter.

It said the RCI was to protect public interests by determining the extent to which the losses had affected national reserves.

"This is because preliminary investigations found the actual losses were greater than what was previously presented to former ministers and Parliament," it said.

The task force, which was set up on Feb 15, was chaired by former chief secretary to the government Mohd Sidek Hassan.

It was established to make a preliminary finding on allegations that the central bank had incurred forex losses of at least US\$10 billion (about RM44 billion) between 1991 and 1993.

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