

**Dr M: Claims of opposition influencing DoJ 'extraordinarily stupid'**  
**Malaysia Today**  
**June 23, 2017**

**Former prime minister says the US is not like Malaysia and even the president there is answerable for any wrongdoing he is found to have committed.**

PETALING JAYA: Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed any notion that the Malaysian opposition was behind the US Department of Justice's (DoJ) move to seize assets allegedly bought with 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB)-related funds, calling such claims "extraordinarily stupid".

The former prime minister, who is now PPBM chairman, said the crimes alleged by the DoJ took place in the US where the authorities are not easily swayed by external influences.

He said the alleged crimes involved US banks and properties, with accusations made based on the country's Kleptocracy Asset Recovery law.

He added that the US embassy in Malaysia had also denied that the DoJ move was to help bring down the federal government.

"The US is not like Malaysia," he said.

"In the US, the president is at the receiving end of reports about himself from relevant officials on whatever misdemeanour he may have done.

"And the president can be removed because of wrongdoing reported by officials from specific agencies. That's what happened to president (Richard) Nixon because of the Watergate scandal (in the early 1970s)," he said.

"To accuse Malaysian opposition parties of being capable of influencing the US DoJ is extraordinarily stupid," he said in blog post today.

On June 16, Communications and Multimedia Minister Salleh Said Keruak reportedly condemned the opposition and its supporters, saying they were prepared to ignore national sovereignty and use foreign powers to interfere in the country's political affairs.

"It is unnecessary for us to seek the help of foreign powers to topple the national leadership. I think that is wrong, and I regard it as a betrayal of Malaysia's independence," Salleh had said.

His statement came a day after the DoJ filed its second action in California, seeking to seize US\$540 million (RM2.3 billion) in assets including art works, jewellery and film rights purchased with funds allegedly embezzled from 1MDB.

The DoJ's first suit was filed in July last year, when Washington sought to confiscate more than US\$1 billion (RM4.28 billion) in connection with Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund.

On June 20, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Rahman Dahlan said the DoJ had "rushed" into publishing the details of its investigation which was still ongoing, and questioned who in Malaysia had collaborated with the agency.

"I'm wondering (because) you still have an investigation going on, yet you come out with statements that are so flamboyant, over the top, and full of insinuations," Rahman said.

"You have to remember, you're talking about a country that is about to go into an election, and you know these kinds of statements will be fully utilised and abused by the opposition."

A spokesperson from the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur was quoted by Malaysiakini yesterday as saying that the suits were not aimed at toppling the Malaysian government.

"The goal is to recover the assets and return them for the benefit of the citizens of the affected country," the spokesperson said.

On a related matter, Mahathir, who was MP for Kubang Pasu in Kedah during his tenure as prime minister, also said he had returned to the constituency yesterday to break Ramadan fast there for the first time since resigning as Kubang Pasu Umno chairman 14 years ago.

"There were many Kubang Pasu Umno members who attended the iftar event. I was sad that many of them are still in Umno," he said, adding that the party was not the same as it had been under him and when it was founded.

He claimed the party had been "hijacked" to be made an instrument to protect crime.

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