

11 APR 1997

Kit Siang-Muhammad

RESIGN OR TAKE LONG LEAVE, KIT SIANG DARES MUHAMMAD

KUALA LUMPUR, April 11 (Bernama) -- Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang has called on Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib to resign or take a long leave pending the outcome of his court trial scheduled in an Australian court in August.

In a statement today, he said Muhammad, who is facing two charges for failing to declare cash in various currencies worth RM2.4 million found in his baggage at the Brisbane International Airport last December, should resign before the meeting of the Selangor State Assembly which begins on Monday.

He said Muhammad's resignation would end the "enormous embarrassment" he was causing the nation with endless international reports about his alleged vast wealth.

"If Muhammad is not prepared to resign, at least he should immediately take a long leave until the outcome of his court case in August," said Lim who welcomed an assurance by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) would be given a free hand in its investigations into allegations of corruption and property ownership against Muhammad.

The Brisbane Magistrate's Court was told earlier today that Muhammad, who has been charged with attempting to transfer the money out of Australia, would face an additional charge of making a false declaration when he appears in court in August.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday that four senior ACA officers were already in Australia to investigate the origin of the RM2.4 million found on Muhammad when he was detained at the Brisbane Airport on Dec 22.

He said the officers would also investigate a report in the Brisbane Courier Mail newspaper that Muhammad had acquired properties in Australia worth millions of ringgit.

Lim in his statement said that if Muhammad did not resign or go on leave, he would continue to compromise the credibility, integrity and authority of the Selangor state government as well as Malaysia's international reputation.

--BERNAMA

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