

Fulfill royal commission promise, Najib told
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The family of DAP political aide Teoh Beng Hock will turn to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to make good of his word and direct that a royal commission of inquiry be set up, given the open verdict delivered at the conclusion of the inquest today.

"We want Najib to open a royal commission because we are unsatisfied with the verdict. So much evidence pointed to homicide so why couldn't the coroner find in that favour?"

"We need support. We cannot accept the open verdict, we cannot accept not knowing how he died," said Teoh's sister Lee Lan (centre), who wept uncontrollably and was inconsolable after the verdict was read out today.

Soon after Teoh's death, Najib had promised the family that he would direct that a royal commission be formed if the family finds the inquest ruling unsatisfactory.

Coroner Azmil Muntapha Abas today said he could not conclude that the cause of death was suicide or homicide, but could say that Teoh had sustained pre-fall injuries to his neck which could have contributed to disorientation due to lack of oxygen to the brain.

The thirty-year-old was found dead on the fifth floor landing of Plaza Masalam, Shah Alam on July 16, 2009, after overnight interrogation as a witness by the Selangor Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on the 14th floor office of the building.

Teoh's mother, Teng Show Hur, who was clutching a photo of her son, had nothing but blame for the MACC.

"If the MACC officers had not asked him to go to their office, he would not have died," she said, grief-stricken.

Revision at High Court

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang, also present today, said the commission's terms of reference should be as wide as possible to investigate the circumstances surrounding Teoh's questioning, the circumstances of his death and the police investigations which followed.

According to the family's counsel Karpal Singh (in wheelchair), they will also file a motion in the High Court to review the judgment as soon as possible.

"It ought to have been homicide, as the evidence shows that it is not suicide. There were many details in the evidence which point to this, and this will be aired in the High Court review," he said.

His son, Gobind Singh Deo (left in photo), who took over from Karpal mid-way through the 18-month inquest, added that police investigations into Teoh's death were also found to be shoddy, and that the case should be re-opened following the coroner's finding of pre-fall injury.

RM100,000 for campaign

Some 100 people were forced to wait for the verdict at the courthouse lobby as there was no room in the public gallery.

Many were from the civil society group Malaysians for Beng Hock and wore T-shirts which read 'Justice for Beng Hock' with white daisies pinned on them. They also held up a banner that read 1Tahun Keadilan untuk Beng Hock (1Year Justice for Beng Hock).

Interestingly, not a peep was heard from Hor Boon Chong (in red shirt), who has attended each of the 56 hearings, and has been an unmissable figure, often belting out "Bunuh! (Murder!)" after each session.

Selangor executive councilors and several Pakatan Rakyat politicians were seen squashed together in the tight public gallery. Also present was Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, who walked into the court room just as Azmil was about to read out his verdict.

Met later, Khalid and Teoh's boss and Selangor exco member Ean Yong Hian Wah both said that they had "expected" the open verdict.

Fellow exco member Dr Xavier Jeyakumar also announced that the Selangor government is allocating RM100,000 for research into death in custody in Malaysia.

"We will also use the money for public education on the matter," he said.

Nazri: Accept verdict

Meanwhile, de facto Law Minister Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz, in a statement today appealed to the public to accept the verdict with an "open heart".

"All parties were given ample opportunities to appoint and to be represented by their own counsels. The inquest process was done according to what is provided under the law and it is something transparent," he said.

He urged the public not to speculate of the coroner's decision and avoid politicising the matter.

Earlier, Karpal had told reporters that he would file a motion to cite Nazri for contempt for having called pathologist Dr Pornthip Rojanasunand a liar.

The application by Teoh's brother Meng Kee had been dismissed by the coroner last May.

"With the conclusion of the inquest today, the High Court should, in the public interest call for the file relating to the application to cite for contempt of court to be revised," said Karpal.

