

**PM questions timing of rape claim**  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has questioned the timing of the rape allegation against Information, Communications and Culture Minister Rais Yatim, asking why it was raised now despite the incident reportedly having occurred in 2007.

He also noted that Rais has issued a denial that he raped an Indonesian maid four years ago.

"He has made a statement. He stands by his statement. He is willing to be investigated. So let the due process take its course," Najib told a press conference in Putrajaya today.

The press conference was called to announce the setting up of a royal commission of inquiry into whether the late DAP aide Teoh Beng Hock's human rights were violated when he was grilled by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

"We cannot prejudge and pronounce something against someone before a proper investigation is done. In any case, what happened was in 2007. The question is, why (bring it up) now?"

**'Wild allegations'**

The alleged rape was reported by an Indonesian social welfare group, Migrant Care, in an internal report the same year and the report has since made its way into blog postings.

Rais, 68, who is Jelebu MP, described the accusation against him as "heaps of libellous statements and awful, ugly and wicked lies".

"I state readily that any report by anyone so far related to this matter should be investigated under the country's laws," he said on Wednesday.

Rais (left) said he and his family members were prepared to extend their full cooperation in such an investigation, and that he would accept and comply with any outcome of the probe.

While the authorities conducted the probe, he added, those indulging in "dirty politics" via the Internet or other media should cease all speculation.

**Najib mum on Christmas Eve dinner**

On another matter, the prime minister declined to speak on what unfolded during a Christmas Eve dinner at Istana Terengganu in Kuala Lumpur between the top leaders of Umno and PAS.

The private dinner gathering was hosted by Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, with Umno represented by Najib, his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin and former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"Me and a few friends, including the leadership of PAS, were there by invitation of the king.

So we attended," he said when quizzed on the issue.

"Everything else (that took place), we have to respect the understanding of the meeting and the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's wish that it be a very private meeting. So I have to respect that request," Najib said.

Kelantan Menteri Besar and PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who was invited by Abdullah to meet with the king, said on Tuesday that he was surprised to find not only the Umno leaders present but also the PAS president and deputy president, Abdul Hadi Awang and Nasharuddin Mat Isa.

The dinner is widely seen to be another revived attempt to seek political cooperation between Umno and PAS in the name of Malay/Muslim unity.

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