

MPs dispute PM's view on TBH and Sarbani
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is wrong in claiming that there are no similarities between the deaths of Teoh Beng Hock and Customs senior officer Ahmad Sarbani Mohamed, Pakatan Rakyat MPs said today.

By brushing aside parallels between the two cases, they said, Najib was undermining the seriousness of Ahmad Sarbani's (left) death while in the MACC's custody.

"Najib is wrong, because there are similarities with Teoh Beng Hock's death. Both died at a government building, while in the custody of an enforcement agency," said Klang MP Charles Santiago.

Santiago and three other MPs - Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad, Teluk Intan MP M Manogaran and Kota Raja MP Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud went to meet with Selangor MACC director Jaafar Mahad to relay their concerns over the safety of members of the public to the commission.

Manogaran said he is personally unsatisfied with the statements made by Najib and the MACC on Ahmad Sarbani's death, and questioned whether or not the commission is taking the public for a ride.

"People claim that he had gone (to the Federal Territory MACC office) voluntarily, but in my experience as a lawyer, nobody who is a suspect or witness would go voluntarily.

"If he really wanted to commit suicide, why do it at the MACC? Can't he do it at any other building?" he said.

'Speaker should call emergency sitting'

Manogaran added that Parliamentary speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia should call an emergency sitting after the Sarawak state election to discuss Ahmad Sarbani's case, and the many other deaths in custody.

He also urged the police to make public the autopsy report on Ahmad Sarbani, to clear the public's doubts over the transparency of their investigations.

Khalid (right) stressed that the onus is now on the MACC and the police to make sure the investigation into Ahmad Sarbani's death is carried out thoroughly and fairly.

"If the investigations are cincai (shoddy), the public will reject it... The PM should also not belittle this issue, because this is a big issue that affects public confidence in the government," he said.

Khalid said however that Jaafar assured them that the Selangor MACC office has taken steps to make sure people are safe on their premises, including installing CCTV cameras in their interrogation rooms and to accompany suspects and any individual from the moment they enter their office till they leave the building.

Meanwhile, some 50 uniformed police officers were assembled in front of the MACC's office

at Wisma PKPS, in anticipation of a group of protesters who were supposed to picket over Ahmad Sarbani's death.

The protesters, made up of forwarding agents and runners, however never showed up.

Later, it was learnt that the protest had been postponed until after Friday prayers.

Charles explained that around 300 were supposed to come, but he was told that they decided against it after they received calls threatening to drop their contracts if they went ahead with the protest.

Khalid added that the strong police presence outside the MACC office also does not help in winning over public perception on Ahmad Sarbani's unfortunate death.

"Using police like this gives the impression that they have something to hide," he said.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people comprising freight forwarders and runners brought Port Klang to a near standstill as they held a protest.

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