

## **Customs wants to meet PM to clear graft charge**

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The Royal Malaysian Customs Union wants to meet with the prime minister over claims that the Customs department is responsible for RM108 billion in revenue loss to the country.

Union president Ibrahim Ahmad said they want to meet with premier Najib Abdul Razak to seek his help to clear the department's name.

Ibrahim (right) said it was unreasonable to assume that the loss of RM108 billion was due to the questionable practices of the Customs department when its revenue only hit RM28 billion last year.

"We will send a telegram to the Prime Minister's Office as soon as possible," he told a press conference after a union meeting at the Customs Complex in Kelana Jaya today.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission investigations division director Mustafar Ali told a press conference on April 2 that a nationwide swoop on Customs officers that began on March 28 resulted in 62 staff being arrested.

According to a Bernama report, millions of ringgit and gold bars were also seized in the raids on more than 100 premises of forwarding and holding companies, besides the homes of Customs officers, over 48 hours, which also involved officers from Bank Negara, the Inland Revenue Board and the Attorney-General's Chambers.

### **48 of the officers arrested from Port Klang**

Of the 62 Customs officers arrested, 48 were from Port Klang, one of five Customs premises raided the high-powered task force led by the MACC.

The other premises were in Kuantan, Penang and the Tanjung Pelepas and Pasir Gudang ports in Johor, and those arrested were rank-and-file and senior officers, among them nine female staff.

The report said MACC investigations showed that RM108 billion that should have been earned by the country annually have "vanished" and that more than RM10 billion have been illegally transferred overseas as a result of corruption and abuse of power by Customs officers.

The host of offences included massive under-declaration of duties, tax evasion and money laundering, all made possible due to outright systemic corruption, Bernama added.

Ibrahim noted that the Customs department periodically updated the federal Statistics Department on its progress in collecting tax revenue, and that everything was in order.

"We have consistently done so all this while... every year we get around RM28 billion, so the figure of RM108 billion is impossible."

**'Customs officers BN supporters all this while'**

He said the union has also arranged to meet with MACC's Mustafar "to get an explanation" on the progress of the investigations into its "3B operation" in which the 62 Customs officers were nabbed.

He said neither the union nor the Customs officers have any intention of obstructing the MACC investigations, stressing that the Customs staff "have been BN supporters all this while".

Ibrahim added that the union also wanted the MACC to make sure that the Customs officers nabbed were not assaulted, and he also called on the MACC to be more responsible.

However, when asked numerous times to elaborate on this point, Ibrahim clammed up, saying only that the union did not receive any report of physical abuse from Customs officers and that it was merely "worried".

### **'Clear Ahmad Sarbani of suicide claims'**

He did not want to comment on the recent death of senior Customs officer Ahmad Sarbani Mohamed, saying that this was best left in the hands of the investigating authorities.

"We also hope Ahmad Sarbani's name can be cleared of claims that he committed suicide. He was a very honest man," Ibrahim said.

The president of the public sector trade union federation Cuepacs, Omar Osman, who also attended the Customs union meeting, fired a salvo at parties politicising Ahmad Sarbani's death, and echoed Ibrahim's sentiments that the matter was best left to the authorities to investigate.

Omar particularly urged the media to stop speculating on the cause of Ahmad Sarbani's death, saying, "if you don't know about the issue, please do not speculate".

He also said that the Customs union, accompanied by Cuepacs, would meet with Mustafar at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya at 3pm on April 12.