

'PM must explain Shafee's secret mission abroad'

MalaysiaKini.com

April 18, 2012

By S Pathmawathy

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak must divulge the purpose of engaging senior lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah to embark on a "confidential" assignment overseas, said the PKR lawmaker who had revealed the matter.

NONE“(He) has appointed a lawyer to go to places to do something. Now this is now a matter of public interest because the lawyer claims that he has been appointed by the government, in particular Najib and (his wife) Rosmah (Mansor),” said Machang MP Saifuddin Nasution (right in photo).

“Why appoint a private lawyer when the government has the Attorney-General's Chambers at its disposal? If Shafee is under the government's instructions, then public funds are being used for his travels.”

He told reporters in the Parliament lobby today that, with news of the confidential mission disclosed, it is only right that Najib should come clean on the purpose of Shafee's visits to New York, London, Dubai and Paris.

NONEYesterday, Saifuddin had revealed a letter from Shafee (left) addressed to Chief Justice Arifin Zakaria, Court of Appeal president Md Raus Sharif and Chief Judge of Malaya Zulkefli Ahmad Makinuddin, applying for them to postpone all his cases scheduled from April 2-25, in the Dewan Rakyat while debating amendments to the Penal Code.

De facto law minister Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz, when winding up the matter, denied that Shafee was engaged by the government and alluded that it could have been a private appointment by Najib as it involves Rosmah.

“It was not a government appointment. The government cannot appoint a lawyer to represent the prime minister's wife,” Nazri said, adding that it could have been a case of “misrepresentation”.

In the letter dated March 23, Shafee had said that he is “to undertake a sensitive legal assignment overseas that must be completed before the general election”.

This, he said, would entail travel to three cities - New York, London and Dubai, and possibly Paris - for a span of at least three weeks.

“And over this course of time (I) would be involved in intensive legal preparations such as negotiating with parties and their witnesses, drafting claims and affidavits and interviewing witnesses who are in New York, London, Paris or Basel (Switzerland),” the letter states.

Said Saifuddin: “The secret mission has raised so many questions. Moreover, Shafee has requested for a blanket postponement.”

‘Intensive legal preparation’

According to the letter, Shafee will be occupied in “intensive legal preparation” which involves negotiating with parties and witnesses, drafting claims and affidavits and interviewing witnesses, in the metropolitan cities.

As the matter concerned is confidential, Shafee said he could only “explain the nature of the legal assignment” upon a private meeting.

Apologising for requesting the postponement, Shafee reasoned that the circumstances were such that the appeals and hearing fixed required him to be present personally to be sorted out.

“So that (I) can travel to undertake this governmental assignment without any worry over the cases being unattended to,” he has stated.

Attached with the two-page letter is an appendix detailing the 33 cases scheduled to be heard from April 2 to 25.

Saifuddin pointed out that it is not just the integrity of the lawyer and the prime minister which is at stake but also the judiciary.

PKR Subang MP R Sivarasa, who was also present, said he had double checked the authenticity of the letter with Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee, as one of the cases involving the Bar and Shafee on April 13 was also postponed.

“I would like to ask the government, specifically to Nazri, what action they propose to take when a lawyer writes to the Chief Justice, to the President of the Court of Appeal and the Chief Judge of Malaya saying that he is appointed by the government of Malaysia,” Sivarasa said.

“When Nazri was asked the question yesterday, he said he has no knowledge and that it might have been a personal appointment by Najib and Rosmah. Fine, we accept it, but what is the government going to do about the lawyer?” he said.

Sivarasa also asked the government to come clean on the case - whether it was a criminal or civil matter - that Najib and Rosmah were involved in.

‘Are we talking about the Scorpene case?’

Selayang parliamentarian William Leong noted the possibility of the “mission” being linked to French investigations into alleged corruption in the purchase of two Scorpene submarines by Malaysia, which may also cast more light on the murder six years ago of Mongolian Altantuya Shaariibuu.

azlan“We want the prime minister to come out and confirm what’s this case about, are we talking about the Scorpene case in Paris?” asked Leong.

Sivarasa, who is a practising lawyer, said that Shafee’s claim of representing the government could be “professional misconduct”.

However, as the aggrieved party, it was up to the government to act on Shafee, explained Sivarasa.

“If the prime minister has sent Shafee on a confidential mission, he should quietly do his job, not tell the whole world,” he jibed.

