

Testify if there's nothing to hide, Najib urged

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By Susan Loone

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has urged Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to testify in a court case in Paris over allegations that French submarine builder DCNS had allegedly paid illegal commissions to Malaysian officials.

Lim (left) said Najib should have no problems appearing in court to assist investigations on the case if he is subpoenaed by French judges.

He added Najib should be willing to be a witness in the case filed by human rights NGO Suaram in 2010 over the alleged charges if "he has nothing to hide".

The DAP secretary-general stressed that the public demanded accountability from its leaders on military spending, and answers related to the murder of Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu in 2006.

"If I were the PM, I would definitely answer and testify in the French court if I have nothing to hide," Lim told reporters in Penang today.

"There is a judicial investigation going on and the French are investigating their own companies. If Malaysian officials are involved, the PM and others should offer their assistance," he added.

Lim was talking about Najib's response when asked to comment on the opening of the case in the Paris Tribunal Grande Instance last week.

At a press conference held after Najib's (right) dialogue sessions with Chinese and Indian NGOs in Penang yesterday, the premier snubbed questions about the case and whether he would testify in France.

"I don't need to comment... I don't want to comment, thank you," he said before ending the press conference abruptly.

Suaram has submitted Najib as a witness as he was then the defence minister involved in the procurement of the submarines when the RM7.3 billion deal was inked in 2002.

Among others, Suaram had also submitted Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as a witness. However, the defence minister has reversed his earlier decision to testify in France.

The deal - which involved the purchase of two Scorpene-class submarines by Malaysia - is allegedly linked to the gruesome murder of Altantuya by military C4 explosives in Shah Alam by two of Najib's former bodyguards.

Another of Najib's close ally and political analyst Abdul Razak Baginda (left) was also charged but was later acquitted without his defence being called.

French inquiry judges are looking into alleged corruption practises by DCNS which had reportedly paid millions in illegal commissions to two companies linked to Razak.

Najib has denied any involvement in the case and has sworn on the Quran that he had never known Altantuya, who was said to have been a translator for the submarines deal.

Meanwhile, Lim warned that Najib or others allegedly involved in the case may refuse to testify in court but may face arrest if they set foot in Europe.

This follows a Malaysiakini report which stated that Ahmad Zahid may face the fate of being arrested in Europe, much like former Chilean president Augusto Pinochet, should he refuse to attend the French inquiry on the Scorpene submarines purchase.

“This applies to those countries in the European Union zone, not just France. One who tries to dodge testifying in court may be subpoenaed or arrested when he sets foot there.

“Najib and Ahmad Zahid should take the opportunity to testify and show the world there is nothing to hide, that there is no cover-up, wrongdoing or anything illegal,” added Lim.

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