

PKR: George Kent was 'go-between' for PM, Thales
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By Aidila Razak

PKR today revealed documents that it argued show Thales International, the company involved in the French-Malaysian submarine purchase deal, was set to win the bid for the LRT Ampang Line extension project.

At a press conference today, PKR director of strategy Rafizi Ramli alleged the documents indicate that Thales was using local company George Kent as a "go-between" with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Referring to a technical evaluation report for the project by Halcrow, he said Thales was "set to win the bid", with the firm being involved in three joint-ventures bidding for the project.

The three include the George Kent-Wijet-Thales consortium, which the technical evaluation report states is to be considered despite failing the technical evaluation.

"Every single rule was broken in order to give an advantage to Thales.

"Who else can make these instructions unless it was under the patronage of the prime minister?" Rafizi asked.

The project is under the purview of the Finance Ministry, which is also headed by Najib.

Najib earlier dismissed claims of irregularities, saying that the tender process for the roughly RM1 billion project was done "properly".

French lawyer Joseph Breham, who is acting for NGO Suaram, revealed in May that French investigators found evidence to suggest that Thales had paid 32 million euros (RM144 million) to purchase secret naval documents from Terasasi, a company owned by Abdul Razak.

The Defence Ministry has since said that it found no evidence of such a defence leak.

Rafizi said the link to Najib was strengthening, considering that George Kent is controlled by Tan Kay Hock who has been reported by The Star as Najib's "golf buddy".

According to Halcrow's report made available to the press today, the technical evaluation panel was "instructed by Prasarana", following an interim review on June 17, to include all bidders despite Halcrow's suggestion to remove the four lowest scorers.

Rafizi said this included George Kent-Wijet-Thales, which scored 55.17 percent, far behind the top scorer Balfour Beatty-Invensys, which scored 80.10 percent.

George Kent awarded letter of intent

He said that it was even more alarming that the George Kent consortium has been issued a letter of intent (LOI) for the project sometime towards the end of last month.

He could prove the LOI was issued as third party documents show that George Kent has started engaging with sub-contractors and financiers for the project.

"I know tender committee procedures. I sat on tender board committees for Petronas' upstream petrochemical projects... worth RM10 billion to RM20 billion.

"When an LOI is issued it is 90 percent sure that (the recipient will be awarded the project)," he said.

Rafizi would reveal the third party documents once project owner Syarikat Prasarana Nasional Bhd responds.

"I don't have the LOI. Insiders tell me the LOI was part of documents taken during the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission raid on Prasarana on June 29," he said.

Prasarana's chief executive officer yesterday questioned the authenticity of documents exposed by Rafizi and said that the letter of award has not been issued

Rafizi also claimed that the issuance of the LOI was not valid as the George Kent consortium bid's validity period had expired.

While he does not have documents to back this claim, Rafizi said, he has full trust in his informants as the documents they have been leaked to him have been genuine thus far.

The documents are proven genuine, he said, as the Finance Ministry has lodged a police report over their leaks and police are investigating the case under the Official Secrets Act.

He explained that a bidder places a validity period for his bid, to account for rising costs over time, and giving the project to George Kent when the period had expired may lead to variation orders.

"So, it may go over and beyond the RM1 billion (estimated)," Rafizi said.

Malaysiakini had contacted George Kent when the allegation first surfaced but its officer, who declined to give his name, has refused to comment.

Contacted today, another officer who is dealing with the bidding exercise refused comment and requested that Malaysiakini refer to his superior.