

PI Bala: They tried to bribe me... again
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Private eye P Balasubramaniam has emerged from hiding to drop yet another bombshell - that there was a second attempt to bribe him when he was in exile in India, this time to smear PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Speaking to Malaysiakini in an interview in Kuala Lumpur last month, Balasubramaniam claimed that he was approached about a week before the Sarawak state election in April last year.

"You know these guys, they already got 'good news' from Perth and they needed more 'good news' from India," said Balasubramaniam cryptically, though he declined to elaborate further.

At the time, the campaign machineries of both sides of the political divide had been in high gear as every and all possible means were being used to woo voters in the crucial state election.

It was also around this time Raja Petra Kamaruddin's interview with TV3, which was done during the controversial blogger's visit to Australia, hit the airwaves.

In the interview which was also carried by the mainstream TV stations, Raja Petra disavowed his statutory declaration (SD) linking Prime Minister Najib Razak's wife Rosmah Mansor to the Altantuya Shaariibuu murder case.

Raja Petra, who is in self-imposed exile in United Kingdom, alluded that his SD was based on information 'planted' by PKR leaders desperate to prevent Najib, who was then deputy prime minister, from succeeding Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Bala keeps lawyer in the loop

In Balasubramaniam's case, the private eye claimed he was asked to implicate Anwar and PKR leaders of paying him to commit perjury in his 2008 SD linking Najib with murdered Mongolian national Altantuya.

He said he was approached by the same people who had threatened and subsequently paid him a substantial amount to sign a second SD to say that his first sworn statement was made 'under duress' - businessman Deepak Jaikishan (right) and a police officer by the name of Suresh.

A key figure in the controversy surrounding the murder of Altantuya, Balasubramaniam fled to India with his family after signing the second SD.

Apparently promised RM5 million for his about-turn, Balasubramaniam said he received a total of RM700,000, in instalments, before the payments eventually stopped.

According to the private investigator, he was contacted by Deepak and Suresh through a mutual friend, Siva, about one week before the Sarawak election.

Siva, a businessman, had called Balasubramaniam's wife at their home in India as the private investigator was at the time taking a former staff on a temple tour in northern India.

Balasubramaniam's wife was told that Suresh and Deepak wanted to speak to him and she relayed the message to him.

"I told my wife I didn't want to speak to anyone."

After she conveyed his response to Siva, Suresh subsequently called her repeatedly on the phone.

"They were 'torturing' my wife like hell. My wife could not take the pressure."

To spare his wife the harassment by Suresh, Balasubramaniam said he finally agreed to speak with Suresh and Deepak, but only after seeking advice from Americk Sidhu, his Malaysian lawyer.

Video recording was to tarnish Anwar

Americk told him to play along, and to document the events as they took place.

"Speak to them, get whatever evidence... it's for your 'insurance'," Balasubramaniam said his lawyer told him.

Suresh then contacted him directly, after his wife gave his phone number to the police officer.

He said Suresh told him: "This is the deal: RM200,000 cash and a condo in Berjaya Times Square and after this, after everything is okay, I'll let you come back, and then maybe we will give you a project."

When Balasubramaniam asked Suresh what they wanted in return, Suresh told him that they wanted him to read out a statement they had prepared and for this to be recorded on video.

Asked what the statement was about, Balasubramaniam described it as "tarnishing PKR number one (Anwar)".

Part of the statement that was given to Balasubramaniam states: "I had to change my second SD because I was approached by Anwar who convinced me that he will become the new prime minister very shortly."

It also says that Anwar gave him RM200,000 "in a bag" and that RM50,000 would be banked into his account monthly.

The statement adds that both Balasubramaniam and Padang Serai MP N Gopalakrishnan would be made senators "to safeguard the rights of the Indians", and that the private eye had finally decided to come out with the "truth" because Anwar had betrayed the Indian community.

Initially Balasubramaniam refused to record the video on his own. He asked Deepak and Suresh to fly to India together with TV3 and Utusan Malaysia journalists, and he would do as they asked.

However, after a whole day had passed and further negotiations took place - this time with Deepak himself - Balasubramaniam finally agreed to make the video recording after it was stressed upon him that they needed the footage urgently.

Suresh then banked in RM100,000 into an account in the name of Balasubramaniam's wife. Then, through Siva, Deepak and Suresh handed over a copy of a sale-and-purchase agreement for the Berjaya Times Square condominium.

However, Balasubramaniam said he played his trump card after leading both Deepak and Suresh on.

'Deepak's furious call recorded'

"It (the video) was ready, already keyed in, I just (needed to) mail it. What I did was to mail it to my lawyer. When Deepak called, I told him I was sorry, I pressed the wrong button and mailed it to my lawyer instead."

On hearing this, Deepak was livid with anger.

"He was shouting at me like hell - that recording is with my lawyer - our last telephone communication, (and) I recorded it."

Asked if this was his intention right from the beginning, Balasubramaniam said "yes" and gave a hearty laugh.

"You know, this was the best opportunity I had. I did not come to ask (him for) money, I did an (first) SD, (and they) all came and jumped (on me) and sent my whole family (away to India).

"I lost my mother, I lost everything, what is left? I am sitting in Malaysia, my wife is sitting in India."

According to Balasubramaniam, his mother died when he was in hiding in India. It was only later, after Najib became prime minister, that he was able to make secret trips to Malaysia.

The private eye said he transferred the RM100,000 Suresh put in his wife's bank account to his lawyer's client account, and asked it to be returned to Deepak, who has a carpet business and is a close friend of PM's wife, Rosmah. The sale-and-purchase agreement of the condominium is also with his lawyer.

Balasubramaniam disclosed that he had recorded some of the conversations he had with Deepak and kept a logbook detailing everything that took place.

The evidence, he said, was being kept for his protection.

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