

'Weird officers behind Najib's funny business'

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By Nigel Aw

Malay Chambers of Commerce Malaysia (DPMM) president Syed Ali AlAttas today clarified his remark that Najib Abdul Razak was indulging in "funny business" (perkara pelik pelik) in relation to the MRT project was actually an indirect reference to the role played by the prime minister's officers.

"I think these are 'pelik-pelik' officers. They are too busy. So when they are busy, they give 'pelik-pelik' recommendations to the prime minister.

"Then the prime minister will make such recommendations," he told a press conference at the chamber's headquarters in Bukit Damansara this afternoon.

On Monday, Syed Ali had told the premier not to indulge in "funny business" with the MRT contracts when no DPMM member managed to land one.

Syed Ali added that the statement merely reflected the outcome of its roundtable forum on government-linked companies.

To back this, DPMM secretary-general Hanafee Yusoff read out a statement issued through the forum's secretariat by Malay Contractors Association president Mokhtar Samad who is a member of DPMM.

The statement lamented a condition imposed by Gamuda that required interested contractors to have a minimum paid up capital of RM10 million to RM20 million - a condition few 'Class A' bumiputera contractors can meet.

"Here, Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera (Teraju) must play an active role, do not be all noise and no substance.

'If Teraju fails, Najib fails'

"The Malays depend on Teraju and if Teraju fails, then indirectly the prime minister is seen as having failed as Teraju is under Majlis Tindakan Ekonomi Bumiputera (MTEB) which is chaired by Najib himself," read Hanafee.

The statement added that Malay contractors were dissatisfied at being deprived of an opportunity.

When it was pointed out that clarifications from MRT Corp and Teraju revealed that 47 percent of the contracts were granted to bumiputera companies, Syed Ali said they weren't genuinely Malay-owned companies while DPMM members represent 100 percent Malay-owned companies.

"What is a bumiputera company? 51 percent (Malay ownership) is also bumiputera. But in companies, you know very well you may own 51 percent but if you secretly sold your shares while in escrow, its not yours any more. Nobody will know."

Syed Ali said that to remedy this problem only fully Malay-owned companies should be considered bumiputera firms for the MRT project.

On why no DPMM member managed to secure an MRT project contract, he shot back: "Strange isn't it? You answer me".

He also flayed certain government agencies for being absent at its round table forum.

"When we call, they should at least attend. Take Khazanah Nasional, for example, can't they send an officer?"

"If you go to court and you don't attend, then judgement will be made. You can't blame the court," he said.

He added that DPMM's research and development council will be organising a Malay Economic Congress in late October and advised government agencies to participate in order to address Malay contractors' woes.

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