

PM: No basis to claim RM40mil was smuggled
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today denied that there was an attempt to illegally smuggle the RM40 million donation for Sabah Umno into the country.

He was responding to a question on whether there was any basis to the opposition's claim that the funds were smuggled or laundered through Hong Kong.

"No," he said curtly at a press conference at the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, adding: "It has already been explained in Parliament."

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz had yesterday told Parliament that there was no wrong for Sabah Umno to receive the funds as there was no laws against it.

Najib, too, had weighed in on the matter last week, stating that the funds were handled in a "proper way".

However, the opposition has refused to accept the explanation, pointing out that the government had failed to address allegations that the fund was laundered through a foreign country.

The allegations were based on whistleblower site Sarawak Report, which first broke the news about the RM40 million fund after it reported that timber trader Michael Chia, said to be a close confidante of Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman, was detained in Hong Kong for attempting to bring the money out of the country.

Chia, who was detained by Hong Kong authorities in 2008 after he attempted to bring the RM40 million worth of Singapore currency out of the territory, had reportedly explained that the money was not his but was for Musa.

However, the incident came under the spotlight after Nazri, in a parliamentary written reply to Batu MP Tian Chua on Oct 11, explained that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) had established that the money was intended for Sabah Umno and not Musa.

He added that the MACC had also found that there was no element of corruption in the incident.

