

'Najib abused power in defence centre award'

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By Nigel Aw

PKR has accused Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak of abuse of power while he was defence minister, for granting the RM100 million National Defence Research Centre (Puspahanas) project to an unqualified company.

The said company, Selangor Umno Wanita chief Raja Ropiaah Raja Abdullah's (left) Awan Megah Sdn Bhd, has been dormant since 1993 according to a Companies Commission search, said PKR strategies director Rafizi Ramli today.

"This means between 1994 until now, Awan Megah has not done any transaction and has remained as an inactive company," he told a press conference at the PKR headquarters this morning.

"It also means that Najib as then-defence minister has abused his power by awarding a privatisation project worth tens of millions in 2005 to Awan Megah, when it is clearly not a construction company capable of carrying out the project."

Under the deal, Awan Megah was to design and construct the Puspahanas facility in exchange for RM27 million and a 223 acre piece of land in Bukit Raja from the government.

Rafizi said while direct negotiations in awarding contracts were not uncommon, conventionally they were at least given out to companies that still had some capability or background in the field to complete the project.

He claimed this was not the case with Awan Megah and as such it was forced to seek out a partner to complete the project in the form of GuppyUnip Sdn Bhd, five years after the former was awarded the privatisation contract, after ditching businessperson Deepak Jaikishan's AstaCanggih Sdn Bhd from the deal.

He pointed out that GuppyUnip Sdn Bhd had taken care of all the financing for Puspahanas as well as to develop the lands obtained by Awan Megah from the privatisation project.

'Ali Baba company'

As such, Rafizi said Awan Megah was effectively an 'Ali Baba' company that made instant profit by sub-contracting it to others without having to do any work.

"Furthermore, GuppyUnip Sdn Bhd too is not an experienced construction company... as its parent company Unip Berhad's main business is plastic and toothbrush manufacturing," he said, but acknowledged that it had began to venture into some small scale construction projects.

Rafizi (left) said that according to his sources, the Puspahanas project which is in Precinct 1, Putrajaya, is currently at the earthwork stage despite the privatisation contract having been granted in 2005, and has since stalled.

He speculated that GuppyUnip Sdn Bhd may have refused to continue the works on Puspahanas as the land promised to it by Awan Megah, which the latter received from the government, was being held up by the Selangor state government.

Awan Megah had initially entered into a similar deal with AstaCanggih Sdn Bhd and this became the centre of controversy when the latter accused the former of fraud after it entered into another deal with GuppyUnip Sdn Bhd involving the same land.

"So, Awan Megah has made money off AstaCanggih as well as GuppyUnip and now it is going to get RM130 million from the Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera (LTAT)," he said.

The Defence Ministry's LTAT had through its investment arm Boustead Holdings Bhd announced that it will acquire 200 acres of the controversy-plagued land for RM130 million and also buy an 80 percent stake in Deepak's company AstaCanggih Sdn Bhd for RM30 million, which has been described by Rafizi as a bailout by the government.

Deepak, who claimed he made a substantial payment to the premier's family for endorsement of this deal, had been on the warpath with Najib after the deal fell apart, demanding that the premier rectify the problem.

Rafizi said PKR will on Monday launch a nationwide police report campaign on the matter.

He added that Najib can no longer remain silent on this matter and should respond to these allegations.

Raja Ropiah has yet to respond to Malaysiakini's query on this matter.

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