

'Najib's associate pushed Jasbir out of Scorpene deal'

MalaysiaKini.com

July 30, 2013

By Nigel Aw

Although described as the 'architect' of the Scorpene deal, negotiator Jasbir Singh Chahl was in fact pushed out of the agreement and later replaced with defence analyst Abdul Razak Baginda, human rights group Suaram has revealed.

NONE"Suaram urges Jasbir to take the next step and go all the way to reveal the full details of the procurement, on his role in closing the deal and why he was ousted from the negotiations," secretariat member Cynthia Gabriel (right) told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

"Why did then Defence Minister Najib (Abdul Razak) see it fit to intervene and push his long- time friend Abdul Razak into the fray to lead the negotiations instead?"

Cynthia claimed that Jasbir had selectively revealed facts in his front-page interview with New Straits Times (NST) last week and urged the negotiator to come clean on the deal.

She further revealed that, after Jasbir was ousted from the deal in 2002, he had filed a RM50 million lawsuit against Abdul Razak, but later reached an out-of-court settlement.

Also, Cynthia pointed out that Jasbir made no mention of Terasasi (Hong Kong) Limited despite having been one of its directors.

The company was 'hidden' from the Malaysian public and only came to light through a French inquiry, she said. It was later taken over by Abdul Razak and his father as directors.

Last year, French investigation found that naval defence firm DCNS had paid 36 million euro (RM142 million) to Terasasi to acquire the Royal Malaysian Navy's evaluation of the Scorpene class-submarine which was top secret.

azlanSuaram had in 2009 filed a corruption case against DCNS in France, alleging 114.9 million euro (RM452 million) in kickbacks to Perimekar Sdn Bhd - partially owned by Abdul Razak (left) - in the sale of two Scorpene-class submarines to Malaysia.

Both the government and Jasbir have defended the payment as being for services

rendered but have remained silent about Terasasi.

Cynthia queried if Perimekar's purpose was merely to make quick profit from the Scorpene deal.

She pointed out that, between 2009 and 2010, when the submarines were being delivered, the company's income had changed from RM19 million in profits to RM3.3 million lost.

"The point is this is taxpayers' money. We (taxpayers) need to know what happened to the procurement deal," she said.

azlanOn Jasbir's denial that Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu (right) had never served as a translator in the Scorpene deal, Suaram said it was her father who had made that assertion.

"The French inquiry, despite its emphasis on the corruption crimes and kickbacks, have agreed to probe the circumstances around Altantuya's death and whatever connections she could have had with the submarine deal," said Cynthia.

'Renewed persecution'

Jasbir had said that Altantuya, who was shot and then blown up with C4 explosives, was never part of the deal and whatever affair she had was a personal matter for Abdul Razak.

Ultimately, Cynthia said the NST interview, in which Jasbir admitted to cooperating with French investigators, proved that the French inquiry was ongoing and rebuts the government's claim that there is no such probe.

She called on the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to live up to its claim that it also goes after the 'big fish', by investigating the Scorpene deal.

Cynthia criticised the government for attempting a second round of persecution against Suaram even though both the Registrar of Societies and Companies Commission of Malaysia have cleared it.

Also at the press conference were Suaram executive director E Nalini and Ops Scorpene committee member Peter Chong who urged NST to give the NGO similar prominence as right of reply to Jasbir's front-page interview.

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