

'Najib was wrong, Chin Peng did apply to come home'

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Contrary to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's claim, Chin Peng's former comrades and family members have insisted that the late Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) leader had applied to return home following the 1989 Hatyai Peace Accord.

"The lawyers requested three documents from the Home Ministry when Chin Peng first filed the case (to return home) in the Penang High Court.

chin peng funeral 200913 "The first was a list provided by CPM of those who have applied to go back (to Malaysia), the second a list of those rejected by the government and third, a list of those approved.

"Chin Peng's name was in the first document, proving he had applied," his ex-comrade Nan Jin told the media at the sidelines of the second day of Chin Peng's wake in Bangkok today.

Chin Peng's nephew, Lee Chung, added that a news article in 1991 also quoted then inspector-general of police Haniff Omar that the former's uncle had applied towards the end of the one-year stipulated application period.

He also pointed out that then police Special Branch chief Zulkifli Abdul Rahman was quoted in the same year as claiming that Chin Peng's application was being processed.

"So what (Prime Minister) Najib Abdul Razak said is not the truth because logically, the 1991 statements show that an application was made," he said.

Najib said the remains of Chin Peng – or his real name Ong Boon Hua – would not be allowed on Malaysian soil as he did not apply within the one-year period after the Peace Accord and that the family can sue the government if it disagrees.

Chin Peng lost his case in 2008 when he could not produce identification documents to prove his citizenship to the Court of Appeal.

'We'll bring him home with dignity'

NONEMeanwhile, Lee Chung's brother Lee Suvit said the family would "do their best" to fulfill his wish to have his remains returned to his hometown of Sitiawan,

Perak.

"We will try to bring him back with dignity," said Suvit, whose sister cared for Chin Peng until he died of cancer on Sept 16.

The Thai national said that despite dying in exile, Chin Peng died "calm and happy", having spent his twilight years with family, writing and taking walks, "just like any other old man".

While the rest of the world may focus on Chin Peng's political role, for the family, it would be his jokes and kindness which would be missed the most.

Painting a picture of a much-loved patriarch, he said that Chin Peng would play his harmonica at family gatherings and his favourite tune was the song "Red Flag".

Suvit said that even Chin Peng's absence in his children's life was an act of sacrifice to "protect them". Both children are Malaysians and shy away from the public eye to avoid possible reprisals.

NONE Suvit said that his daughter, now only a year younger than Chin Peng when he became CPM secretary-general at 23, grew very close to him.

Yet, he said, Chin Peng's grandnieces and grandnephews, who were seen at the wake, do not know much about their granduncle's political significance.

Born and bred in modern Thailand, their lives are a far cry compared to Chin Peng's who joined the resistance at 15.

"Mine, too, is very different. He used to say 'times were tough in my days' and we'd brush him off.

"Maybe (his grandnephews and grandnieces) know some stories about him from us, but I think they just know that their granduncle is a good man, and whatever his struggle was, it was for a good cause," he said.

Suvit, who now owns a factory in Shanghai, said his own grandchildren would know even less about Chin Peng.

"There is no need to pass down stories about his struggle to the coming generations. They can read about his role in Malaysia's Independence and Southeast Asia in books. He is part of history," he said.

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