

Explain U-turn on PM's role, Mara boss told
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Mara chairperson Annuar Musa should explain the reason for his U-turn on his statement on Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's role in Mara's purchase of property in Australia that reportedly involved kickbacks.

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang made this call after Annuar insisted today that Najib was not involved in approving the purchase - after saying the exact opposite on Wednesday.

"Annuar should know that this is the 21st century, the Information Age. He cannot just behave like monarchs of olden days, when information could be controlled and manipulated, for him to wilfully and arbitrarily insist that he never said what he had actually uttered.

"Or that he had been misunderstood, or his statements had been twisted, when what he said was crystal- clear," Lim said in a statement today.

This is in regard to the report by Australia-based The Age that Mara made a purchase of an apartment block in Melbourne, dubbed 'The Dudley', for A\$22.5 million (RM65 million), which was overpriced by A\$4.75 million (RM13.7 million).

The news report said the extra RM13.7 million paid was laundered out of Australia and paid as bribes to the Malaysian officials responsible for the purchase.

Annuar, who is also Ketereh MP, insisted today that his words at the press conference on Wednesday were "twisted" and blamed news portals Malaysiakini and The Malaysian Insider.

However, both news portals have produced transcripts of the recorded news conference, in which Annuar specifically confirms that Najib was responsible for approving the deal.

Today, Annuar claimed that Najib had actually opposed the deal and therefore the Rural and Regional Development Ministry and Mara had to appeal to the National Economic Council (NEC).

He said the NEC, which is chaired by Najib, eventually approved the deal with a condition that only 30 percent of Mara's fund could be used, with the remaining sum to purchase the property to be borrowed from foreign banks.

'Who was responsible for appeal?'

"Can Annuar explain how he could make such a colossal mistake, to clearly imply that Najib had approved the Dudley Street deal when chairing the NEC, when Najib had in fact

opposed it?

"Was Annuar wrongly briefed – and if so, would the Mara officer responsible for misleading him be penalised?" asked Lim, who is Gelang Patah MP.

He also called on Annuar to explain who exactly was responsible for the appeal.

Annuar should also come clean on whether Najib was involved in approving three other properties purchased by Mara in Australia, which have come under spotlight following The Dudley controversy.

The properties are located at 746 Swanston Street, 51 Queen Street and 333 Exhibition Street, all in Melbourne.

The Age estimated the property on Swanston Street was worth A\$23.5 million while the properties on Queens Street and Exhibition Street were worth a combined A\$40 million.

Yesterday, Annuar sought to distance himself from the controversy, stressing that the deal was inked before his time.

Annuar, who is also an Umno supreme council member, said the purchase was discussed in 2012 and approved by the Mara Council on Feb 21, 2013, but he only became the head of Mara in late 2013.

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