

## **'Dear PM, why gov't making patriotism cheap?'**

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should explain whether the cabinet endorsed the "cheapening of patriotism" by allowing the sale of 'Patriot' vanity plates, said DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang.

Lim said this is in response to the prime minister's own party man, Tengku Putra Haron Aminurrashid, who is Kempas state assemblyperson, demanding to know if the Cabinet approved the Transport Ministry's decision.

This is over the Transport Ministry granting auction rights of the plates to Yayasan Patriot Negara Malaysia (YPNM), which will see the obscure NGO raking in between RM10 million and RM15 million.

"His (Tengku Putra) question whether the Cabinet had approved the 'Patriot' number plate auction scheme deserves an answer from the Prime Minister, Najib Razak (photo) himself.

"I fully endorse Tengku Putra's call to Putrajaya to scrap the auction rights given to YPNM as the government should not allow profiteering in the name of patriotism," said Lim in a statement today.

Lim said there was "nothing more unpatriotic and mercenary" than selling the 'Patriot' plates and described it as "cheapening the patriotism in Malaysia and the contributions and sacrifices of genuine patriots in the country".

He heaped praise on Tengku Putra, saying that the Umno's state assemblyperson's statement that the ministers responsible for approving the scheme were "putting patriotism on their backside".

The proposal was first raised when Hishammuddin Hussein was the acting transport minister and it was approved by Liow Tiong Lai when he took over the ministry.

### **'Gone to the dogs'**

Tengku Putra (photo) had blasted both ministers, stating that the plan should have been shot down as soon as it was presented.

"Have decency, civility and good sense in Malaysia at the Cabinet level gone to the dogs that ministers can approve such a mercenary and cheapskate idea of auctioning "Patriot" number plates...?" asked Lim.

"As if those who used money to buy the 'Patriot' number plates are the greatest patriots in the country – even more "patriotic" than the prime minister, deputy prime minister and ordinary Cabinet ministers?" he added.

Tengku Putra in a scathing post on his blog today, which is coincidentally named "The Patriot", had likened the auction to "prostituting" patriotism.

The 'Patriot 1' number plate alone is expected to fetch up to RM1.3 million.

Meanwhile, Perak DAP Economic Develop Bureau chief Chong Zhemin called on Liow to take responsibility for the Road Transport Department's (RTD) loss of revenue as a result of allowing YPNM to monopoly the auction rights.

He pointed out that the RTD is only expected to get RM1 million while YPNM is looking at a ten to fifteen-fold in profit.

"By approving the scheme, Liow has limited RTD's revenue to only RM1 million.

"Liow must bear full responsibility for this potential loss of revenue by RTD," said Chong who had also lodged a report with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on this matter.

### **Politically-linked people**

"We want the MACC to investigate if there is any abuse of power or corruption involved in the approval of the scheme," said Chong, who is also political secretary to Taiping MP Nga Kor Ming.

"He must explain the rationale for approving the scheme to YPN, without an open tender, and suspend the 'Patriot' sales indefinitely, pending a full investigation into the matter," he said.

Chong said the minister must disclose the relevant documents to show that the granting of the auction rights was according to procedure.

"Failing to do so would only mean that the 'Patriot' car plate scheme was awarded to YPN as a result of political connections and influence of certain parties," he argued.

Malaysiakini in a special report on Tuesday highlighted that the YPN committee comprises politically-linked individuals, with at least three of them having the same paternal name.

The majority of the committee members are also executives in the Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia (PPIM), which in a controversial move had called for a boycott of Chinese businesses that are supportive of the opposition.