

Zafrul confirms cabinet discussion after Dr M queries RM100m housing for Najib

Malaysiakini

18 November 2021

Geraldine Tong

PARLIAMENT | Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz has confirmed that the cabinet discussed the request from former prime minister Najib Abdul Razak for a piece of land and house worth RM100 million.

This came after Dr Mahathir Mohamad (Pejuang-Langkawi) questioned why Najib's request for an RM100-million piece of land and house was not included in Budget 2022.

"The finance minister should explain every item in the budget but now I find that there is an item that is not mentioned in the budget.

"This is about the gift for the former prime minister Najib (above), who will be given a piece of land and house worth RM100 million because of his supposed contributions to the country.

“I want to know what were his contributions? As far as I know, he is a convict who has been sentenced to 12 years of jail and a compound of more than RM200 million,” Mahathir said in the Dewan Rakyat today.

He had interjected Zafrul during the latter’s winding-up speech for Budget 2022.

Zafrul had initially attempted to deflect the question by asking Mahathir to point his query towards the Prime Minister’s Department as the privileges for former prime ministers is under the ambit of that department.

However, when pushed by Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (Independent-Muar), Zafrul acknowledged that Najib’s request had been discussed by the cabinet.

“Yes, we have received the request and we have discussed it in the cabinet.

“Now we have to wait for the cabinet’s decision to be finalised,” Zafrul said.

Syed Saddiq noted that this is the first confirmation of such a request from Najib.

Calls to reconsider Najib's request

He lamented that the government had used lack of money as an excuse when the opposition asked for permanent positions for contract doctors or for additional aid during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“But for one person, one individual, we want to approve RM100 million.

“If we approve such a thing, our name, dignity and conscience will be on the line. I hope the other MPs here will consider this properly,” Syed Saddiq added.

The revelation by Zafrul prompted a number of opposition MPs to voice their dissatisfaction, including Mahfuz Omar (Harapan-Pokok Sena), RSN Rayer (Harapan-Jelutong), Gobind Singh Deo (Harapan-Puchong) and Azis Jamman (Warisan-Sepanggar), among others.

Mahfuz questioned whether the cabinet had given its preliminary agreement to Najib’s request as he nitpicked on Zafrul’s choice of words.

“You said it has not been finalised yet, but is there already a preliminary agreement?” he asked.

In response to that, the smiling Zafrul made a face while turning briefly to look at his fellow members of the administration with one hand raised slightly.

Mahfuz claimed this was a sign that there has been a preliminary agreement.

Zafrul insisted he was only talking about the request and explained that this matter was not included in Budget 2022 as the request was made after the budget was tabled.

“Hence for this to be implemented, it will be brought in the surplus budget bill,” he said.

Opposition MPs up in arms

His ambiguous wording incited the anger of the opposition MPs, who believe his answer means the request has been approved.

As the opposition MPs started interjecting one after another, Zafrul struggled to cut in through the chaos to explain.

“As I said earlier, this request was made after budget was tabled and as such, it did not receive an estimation in Budget 2022.

“As you know, any additional spending after that will have to be brought in the surplus budget bill,” he said.

However, when Gobind pushed him to confirm whether a decision was made by the cabinet with regard to the request and what the basis for the decision was, Zafrul ignored him.

He reiterated that anything related to the privileges of former prime ministers is under the care of the Prime Minister's Department and continued on with his speech.

It was formerly reported based on a source that Najib had requested a privilege from the government in the form of a 1.1ha residential property worth RM100 million in Kuala Lumpur.

He had invoked a little known act which gives special privileges and allowances to former prime ministers, including the ownership of properties and land belonging to the government.

The source also claimed that the request had been approved, though it was drawing protests from ministers and senior officials.

Najib was sentenced to 12 years in jail and fined RM210 million last year after he was found guilty of seven counts of criminal breach of trust, money laundering and abuse of power involving RM42 million in funds from former 1MDB unit SRC

International.

His appeal against the conviction is still pending.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/599782>