

I am the one, says Jasin MP

KUALALUMPUR: The Member of Parliament for Jasin, Datuk Mohd Said Yusof, has admitted that he asked the Customs and Excise Department to close an eye over a case involving the import of sawn timber.

He said he was the person mentioned in yesterday's front page report in the *New Straits Times*.

"I am the one in the story. I went to the Customs office after I got a complaint from an entrepreneur from the Sungai Rambai port. The port is in my constituency," he said.

He said he went to the Customs office in his capacity as a Member of Parliament as well as a forwarding agent.

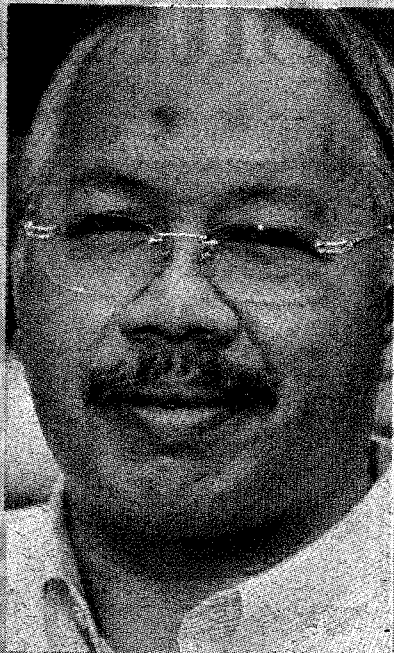
"I went there to ask the Customs officials to be lenient. They did their job in seizing the sawn timber but I went there to seek their help in getting the sawn timber released.

"I asked for the agent to be compounded and the timber released," he said calmly in the lobby.

Mohd Said admitted he asked the department to "close one eye" (*tutup sebelah mata*) and to let the consignment through after issuing a compound.

"The Customs Department was right in holding back the consignment. I only asked for the compound to be issued and the consignment to be released.

"But they seized it. I don't know what happened after that," he said of his



Mohd Said admits asking the Customs Department to 'close one eye'

April 14 meeting with Customs officials at the Sungai Rambai Port office.

Mohd Said said his reason for asking the Customs Department to close an eye was based on a technicality.

He said the sawn timber had exceeded the cross-section of 60 inches, but this was debatable.

"Take into account the hole in the middle of the timber and the bark which would be shorn off, and the size would not have exceeded the 60 inches cross-section requirement for the import of sawn timber," he reasoned.

There would not have been any loss of revenue as there were no taxes or royalties to be paid to the Government, he said.

He, however, added that anything exceeding the 60 inches meant the sawn timber would have had to be classified as logs and this required an approved permit.

Mohd Said said he did not have an interest in the company of the agent who brought in the timber.

"Everybody knows I am a forwarding agent and an MP. I have operated an agency since 1990 and have an interest in the port.

"But I have no stake in the consignment which was brought in or the company which brought it in," he declared.

While debating the Supplementary Supply Bill on Tuesday, Mohd Said accused Customs Department director-general Datuk Abdul Rahman Abdul Hamid of not running his department properly.

Najib: Interference in probe 'not tolerated'

SANDAKAN: Outside interference in any investigation by the authorities cannot be tolerated.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the authorities were free to investigate any cases of alleged wrongdoings and nobody should stand in their way.

"The Government's stand on the matter is very clear in that the authorities are given the

freedom to investigate any cases of crime or abuse of power.

"Nobody should stand in the way of their (Customs Department) investigation," he said at a Press conference after launching the 2006 National level Youth Week at the Municipal Padang here yesterday.

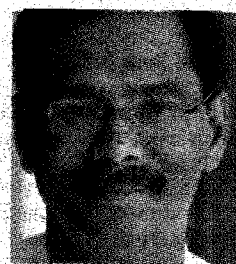
Asked if action could be taken against the MP concerned, Najib said nobody was above the law.

Comments from MPs



● **Wee Ka Siong (BN-Ayer Hitam):** "I cannot say I'm surprised by Shahrir's resignation, as when he was walking out from the Dewan, his body language indicated his intention to do so."

● **Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh):** "Of course I'm shocked by Shahrir's resignation, but I credit him for his brave move. However, I hope he will reconsider his decision as he has brought much good to the BN MPs."



● **S.K. Devamany (BN-Cameron Highlands):** "My BN colleagues and I still want him to lead us. I hope he will withdraw his resignation and we will try our best to persuade him to do so."

● **Datuk Idris Haron (BN-Tangga Batu):** "I didn't support the motion because it was too general and no MP's name was mentioned. At this rate, we might as well refer all 290 MPs to the committee."



● **Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz:** "The members voted against the motion, not against him or his leadership. He is a professional and has been an MP for a long time. Surely he understands House procedure and how BN members were expected to vote. I will meet him and try to dissuade him."

'I quit because of the differences in opinion'

Q: Did you quit because of the differences in opinion?

A: Yes. There is no point. So if the majority of backbenchers voted against the motion, then I should go, right?

Q: Maybe the BBC members were in a dilemma because the motion was by the Opposition?

A: No. I think I have spoken and supported it. If I did not speak up, that is a different matter. The matter would be referred to the committee and then all parties including Customs and the newspaper would be called to give evidence, to check whether it is true or not. That is what Parliament is about. We try people, we make comments about people, we criticise government departments. We criticise other people and we talk about integrity in other places, but integrity must begin in Parliament.

Q: Is your decision based on what happened today

(Thursday) or was it made earlier?

A: I tried, when I was chosen as the chairman, to lead the MPs based on the principles of Parliamentary proceedings, as I understood them, and not from the aspect of Government policy. I do not talk much from the aspect of Government policies. I focus on the principles and integrity of Parliament, how Parliament and MPs should act. If we want Parliament to be respected by the *rakyat*, we must show them that we hold to these principles. That is why, all this while, I have spoken from the aspect of Parliament as an important institution in the politics of this nation. This is where the mandate of the *rakyat* during the general elections lie. Parliament, as an institution, must protect the mandate of the people. It has to have certain principles. That is why I proposed that Parliament should govern itself, whether in terms of finance, human resources or other

aspects. If we fail to carry out our responsibilities, then how can we criticise or hide anyone else? It is in Parliament that we show where integrity must begin.

Q: Will you reconsider?

A: Why should I reconsider?

Q: Because you made the decision within minutes.

A: I think I made the decision the moment I saw there was no support for the motion.

Q: What is your next step?

A: My next step now is to continue to be... I am still Shahrir (laughs). I have not changed.

Q: When are you going to see the Deputy Prime Minister? (He is the chief Whip)

A: I will write a letter first.

Q: What if the DPM advises you against resigning?

A: I don't think that this is an issue. I think there is a very clear issue that there are things that have to be done in Parliament. My role as MP, as chairman of BBC, has always been quite consistent. I protect the rights of my members to even ask a minister to resign. I protect his right. I won because I want Parliament to be a place where MPs are respected. I have encouraged MPs to learn more about the subjects. Of course, there are some things which are done according to party lines. This is not a party matter. There was no decision from the party. It is my responsibility as chairman of BBC to show what it means, what this issue is all about.

Q: Some say you have gone against the party line and the Whip?

A: This is not a party matter. If it is the party line, (Datuk Seri) Nazri (Aziz) will say I should be expelled from Umno. But this is not the case. It is not a party matter.