

Pua accepts Zahid's invite to discuss arms buys
The Malaysian Insider
December 30, 2011
By Yow Hong Chieh

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 30 — Tony Pua said today he is willing to meet with Defence Minister Datuk Seri Zahid Hamidi to seek clarification over the increased cost of buying six advanced warships, which the opposition claims is excessive.

But the DAP publicity chief said the minister should not only explain how the price tag for the littoral combatant ships (LCS) jumped to RM9 billion from RM6 billion but also other "mega acquisitions" as well.

This includes the RM7.6 billion deal for 257 Turkish-made armoured personnel carriers (APC) from DRB-Hicom Bhd, the details of which Zahid claimed he had no knowledge of.

Pua reiterated that Putrajaya must set up a parliamentary oversight committee to review and monitor defence deals in the interest of greater transparency.

"If the ministry is not even willing to subject itself to oversight by Parliament, the country's highest legislative body, then Datuk Seri Zahid Hamidi has no right to talk about 'transparency'," he said in a statement.

Yesterday, Zahid offered to meet with Pakatan Rakyat (PR) MPs to explain the country's defence procurements in a bid to allay their suspicions over the multi-billion ringgit deals.

While Putrajaya maintains such contracts must remain classified as a matter of national security, PR has insisted that Malaysians have a right to know how public funds are spent given the ministry's history of cost overruns.

Transparency International-Malaysia (TI-M) has also urged the government to stop to using national security as an excuse and appoint independent monitors to ensure the opaque deals did not promote graft.

The Malaysian Insider
Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider
Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pua-accepts-zahids-invite-to-discuss-arms-buys/>