

Disabled man asks Sarawak government if aid cut over opposition support
The Malaysian Insider
March 5 , 2012
By Clara Chooi

KUCHING, March 5 — Disabled farmer Frusis Lebi today demanded the government explain its order to discontinue his welfare and agricultural aid over his support for the opposition during last year's Sarawak state polls.

The 51-year-old, who suffers from hand and feet deformities, had last week alleged that the government had cut off all his financial assistance for months now due to his political affiliation.

But the father of two lamented today that his show of opposition support had only been to fly a PKR flag outside his home in Sri Aman near here during the April polls.

"I have my reasons for supporting the opposition but that is not the point... I believe I reserve the right to support whichever party I want," he said when contacted this afternoon shortly after attending a press conference at the DAP headquarters here.

According to Frusis, his monthly RM300 welfare aid had been stopped since last October while his subsidies for fertilisers and fruit seeding were discontinued from December.

Photo of the letter sent to Frusis by Mong.

He alleged that officials from the Welfare Department had explained last year that his disabled persons' aid was halted as his monthly income has already exceeded the aid qualification limit.

On his farming subsidies, Frusis revealed a letter showing instructions allegedly made by Sarawak Assistant Minister Datuk Mong Dagan ordering the Sri Aman Agriculture Department to stop further disbursement of funds due to him.

In the letter dated December 8 sighted by The Malaysian Insider today, Mong had told the department to stop "with immediate effect" all forms of government assistance to Frusis, "an underprivileged person (OKU) from Entulang Entawa, Sri Aman".

"This is because he is against government policies and openly supported the opposition candidate during the 2011 state election. Other than that, he had also prepared an operation room for the opposition candidate," Mong had allegedly written in the letter.

Frusis told The Malaysian Insider that he obtained the letter last Thursday from a department official after pestering the latter repeatedly for a reason why his aid was discontinued.

He denied helping the opposition campaign during the polls, saying all he had done was "sit quietly in my house".

"My family and I feel stressed. I have a 35-year-old son who is also an OKU... a deaf mute," he added.

Sri Aman DAP branch chairman Leon Jimat Donald told The Malaysian Insider that should Mong fail to offer any explanation on the issue by Wednesday, a report will be lodged with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

"We also urge the police to investigate so we can determine the validity of the letter," he said.

"But the victimisation of rural folks in Sarawak has been going on for a long time now. They live in terror here... in fear of being bullied," he added.

Leon said that in Frusis' case, the latter had been brave enough to show his support for the opposition by flying the PKR flag outside his room in the longhouse where he stays with his wife and two sons.

"At the time, the village headman burned the flag but I think he replaced it with another. The point here is that this goes against his constitutional right to freedom of association," he said.

Bandar Kuching MP Chong Chieng Jen told The Malaysian Insider that he will refer the matter to Suhakam.

During the April 16 polls in Barisan Nasional's (BN) fortress of Sarawak last year, the federal opposition pact of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) made historic gains when the DAP doubled its seat representation in the state assembly from six to 12 while PKR won three seats.

The Malaysian Insider

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