

**Zahid Hamidi snubs Scorpene probe inquiry in Paris**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**April 21, 2012**  
**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 21 — Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has said he will not attend an ongoing French probe into allegations Malaysian government officials were involved in a multimillion ringgit Scorpene submarine scandal.

The defence minister also said Putrajaya will not send any representatives to attend the inquiry in Paris.

“Why should I appear? I am not a witness! If I appear, who will pay for my expenses? I don’t want to use my money and the government’s money,” Ahmad Zahid (picture) was reported as saying in vernacular newspaper Sin Chew Daily.

“They can conduct an inquiry, although the Ministry of Defence will not send any representatives to France, but I believe our country’s ambassadors will keep track of the case’s progress,” the Chinese-language daily quoted him as saying.

He added that local human rights group Suaram’s action in bringing the case to the attention of the French authorities was not for legal purposes, but for a “political agenda” against the Malaysian government.

Suaram had previously said that it had resorted to filing a complaint with the French authorities because Malaysia’s Defence Ministry had failed to reply to questions about the Scorpene case in Parliament.

“The Ministry of Defence has always been law abiding and transparent, we have already given them an answer, but they keep creating an issue. If we want to satisfy everyone, there will be no end to this matter,” he said.

Asked about Suaram’s list of witnesses submitted to the French tribunal, which included Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Ahmad Zahid said Suaram was free to use French legal channels for its own goals.

“It’s all right, they have the right to do so, we will also respect the French court’s decision,” the minister was quoted as saying.

Ahmad Zahid also said he hoped Suaram would be able to accept any ruling and not use other issues to twist the truth.

Suaram revealed yesterday that French prosecutors have uncovered evidence to prove the involvement of Malaysian officials in multimillion ringgit worth of commission as kickbacks for the sale of two Scorpene submarines to Malaysia.

Malaysia paid RM6.7 billion in 2009 for the two submarines of which RM574 million was earmarked for co-ordination and support services for Perimekar Sdn Bhd, owned by Najib’s

close associate Abdul Razak Baginda.

According to PKR's Chua Tian Chang, the French court had asked for Abdul Razak's address as it wants to subpoena him as a witness in the trial. He is believed to be based in the UK now.

The purchase, made while Najib headed the Defence Ministry, has been linked by human rights groups and opposition parties to the 2006 murder of Mongolian translator Altantuya Shaariibuu.

Abdul Razak, who was Altantuya's alleged one-time lover, was acquitted of a charge of abetting two Special Action Squad members — Azilah Hadri and Sirul Azhar Umar — to commit the murder in 2006.

Altantuya's father Dr Setev Shaariibuu recently told a press conference in Petaling Jaya that he had offered himself as a witness in the Scorpene submarine probe, claiming that his testimony would be able to "connect the dots" between her death and the Scorpene case.

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