

'Opposition trying to create scandal'
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NO CONNECTION: Agreement for submarine purchase inked in 2002, while Altantuya Shaariibuu came into the picture only two years later, says MP

A FORMER Parti Keadilan Rakyat leader has accused the opposition of trying to create a non-existent connection between Malaysia's purchase of Scorpene submarines and the murder of Mongolian Altantuya Shaariibuu.

Datuk Seri Zahrain Mohamed Hashim, who is the independent member of parliament of Bayan Baru, said the agreement for the purchase of the submarines was signed in 2002 while Altantuya came into the picture only two years later, as according to the facts of her murder case.

"So, how can the opposition say that Altantuya was involved in the purchase of the Scorpene submarines?"

"This shows that some people had acted based on hearsay," he said when contacted yesterday.

Zahrain said it was clear that the opposition was attempting to link Altantuya's murder to the purchase of the submarines in an effort to implicate Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He added that the opposition was hoping the issue would develop into a scandal.

He said this was evident when Kulim Bandar Baru member of parliament Datuk Zulkifli Noordin, who was the defence lawyer in the Altantuya case, withdrew from it and said later he had done so because he had been ordered to "fabricate and conjure up the story" that Najib was involved.

He, however, had not named the person who ordered him to do so.

The High Court in 2009 had found Chief Inspector Azilah Hadri, 32, and Corporal Sirul Azhar Umar, 36, guilty and sentenced them to death for the murder of Altantuya.

Zulkifli, who was a former lawyer of PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, had two days ago accused the opposition of attempting to create an issue out of a probe by French magistrates into Malaysia's purchase of the Scorpene submarines.

He said he was aware of a plan by leaders of opposition parties who wanted to create an issue out of the submarines' purchase in an effort to link it to the prime minister.

The Royal Malaysian Navy had received the delivery of the Scorpene submarines, KD Tunku Abdul Rahman and KD Tun Razak in 2009.

Zahrain accused non-governmental organisation Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram) of being partisan for its involvement in trying to cast doubts on the purchase of the submarines.

He said Suaram, which had initiated the French judicial inquiry to look into the submarine deal, had been nothing but the voice of the opposition.

"Suaram's role is supposed to provide constructive criticism. However, it has been harping on fabricated stories like this one. I don't think that is fair.

"If you want to attack the government, you must have concrete evidence."

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