

**BN denies racism in refusing Chin Peng's ashes home**  
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**BY JENNIFER GOMEZ**

Key Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmakers denied allegations that Putrajaya was being racist by not allowing the remains of former communist leader Chin Peng to be brought back to Malaysia when the bodies of two Malay terrorists, responsible for bombings in Indonesia, were allowed to be buried here.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, in standing by the government's decision, countered that the two Malay terrorists "did not kill our military and police".

He was referring to terrorists Dr Azahari Husin and Nordin Mohamad Top who were responsible for a string of bombings in Indonesia between 2002 and 2005.

The two were shot dead by Indonesian security forces and their remains were allowed to be buried in Jasin, Malacca, and Pontian, Johor, respectively.

"Those terrorists did not kill our military or police personnel, or our people. I stand by the prime minister's decision on this," said Ahmad Zahid.

The MCA had earlier yesterday insisted that the remains of Chin Peng be allowed back into the country, putting the Chinese party on a collision course with Putrajaya.

MCA publicity bureau chairman Datuk Heng Seai Kie, in calling for the government to fulfil the communist chief's wish to be buried in his hometown in Sitiawan, said the BN government did not need any more bad publicity of being seen as making decisions based on racial lines.

However, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday the country will not budge from its stand and challenged those unhappy with the decision to seek legal redress.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, who fought the communists as a police officer, echoed his boss's views, saying that the case of the two Malaysian terrorists was another story.

"They didn't wage war against Malaysia, their struggle was against another set of people.

"In Chin Peng's case, you need to ask, how many thousands of police personnel were killed, their families, civilians," he countered.

He said if Chin Peng's remains were returned here it would give rise to unnecessary problems.

"Some may want to build him a monument here. He is not a hero, he should have stopped after defeating the Japanese but he didn't, so we don't want people to start glorifying him here," said Wan Junaidi.

On MCA's call for BN not to be racist over the Chin Peng issue, the deputy home minister said, "This is not about race, they are the ones bringing race into this."

Wan Junaidi, however, said that there was no need for Umno to reprimand its coalition partner as MCA was free to voice its views.

"They can say whatever, but the government makes the decision in the end. It is their right to speak up," he summed up.

Former Puteri Umno chief Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, however, took a different view.

Her argument was that Chin Peng was undisputedly a part of Malaysia's history in its struggle for independence.

"Like it or not, he is part of the story, we learnt about him in school. And with technology now, everybody can read all they want about Chin Peng. I don't see the point in not allowing his remains to be brought home," she said.

She added that rather than to view it negatively, it can be a lesson to the younger generation not to do the things Chin Peng did.

Azalina, in expressing her personal view, felt that Putrajaya should consider MCA's request.

Chin Peng, whose real name was Ong Boon Hua, died in a Bangkok hospital on Malaysia Day, a month short of his 89th birthday. He had repeatedly voiced his wish to be buried in his hometown of Sitiawan, Perak.

Since 1989, Chin Peng had tried in vain to be allowed back into Malaysia. His attempts to get the courts to allow his return ended in 2009 when the apex court ruled against his application to reside in Malaysia because he was unable to prove he was born in the country.

Chin Peng fled to China in 1961 and later settled in Bangkok where he was granted an alien passport.

He will be cremated in Bangkok on Monday according to Buddhist rites. – September 21, 2013.

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