

Missing again, Najib, ask Sabah lawmakers
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By Elizabeth Zachariah

Sabah opposition lawmakers today slammed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak for his absence in a time when the state is reeling from the aftermath of the worst-ever earthquake to hit the country.

Kota Kinabalu MP Jimmy Wong said Sabah folk were wondering where the prime minister was and why he has not made an appearance to offer support.

"We are very sad. In this time of disaster, the prime minister does not even bother to come to Sabah. What happened to you? We are experiencing grief," he said in a press conference at the Parliament lobby today.

The visibly angry Sabah lawmaker said Najib need not have bothered with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, referring to the "Nothing To Hide" forum cancelled last week at the 11th hour, but should have prioritised the disaster in Sabah.

"Why wasn't he able to come to Sabah? We have a sleeping government."

Najib left for Saudi Arabia on Saturday on a three-day working visit at the invitation of King Salman Abdulaziz al-Saud, a day after an earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale rocked Ranau, Sabah.

Najib was accompanied by Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Minister in the Prime Ministers Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharum.

The prime minister, however, issued a statement yesterday, saying that he was "closely following the developments" in Sabah, adding that Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, as the National Disaster Management Committee chairman, was there to monitor the situation and manage relief operations.

Najib has come under severe criticism from the public for jetting off to the Middle East despite the situation in Sabah

So far, 18 people, many of whom were climbers on Mount Kinabalu, have been confirmed killed in the earthquake, the first in Malaysia to have claimed lives.

Several minor aftershocks were also felt in Tambunan, Tuaran, Kota Kinabalu and Kota Belud.

Sandakan MP Steven Wong also hit out at Najib, whom he said, should now think of how to compensate mountain guides who will lose their businesses in the aftermath of the disaster.

"Giving them certificates is not enough. The government must think of some way to help these people who will lose their sole trade as activities on the mountain have been halted indefinitely.

"Without these guides, there would have been more casualties on Mount Kinabalu," he said, referring to the heroic deeds of several guides who had saved the lives of climbers following the incident.

Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng, who was also present at the press conference, said this was not the first time that Najib had disappeared during disasters here.

Last December, he came under severe criticism after being pictured playing golf with United States President Barack Obama while many states struggled with Malaysia's worst floods in 30 years, which displaced more than 100,000 people. – June 8, 2015.

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