

Why the bad English in Zahid's letter to FBI, asks Guan Eng
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The Penang chief minister today turned his attention to what he described as poor standard of English in Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's letter defending a Malaysian citizen accused of bookmaking in the United States recently.

Lim Guan Eng said the letter by Zahid on gambling kingpin Paul Phua Wei Seng smacked of secondary school-level English.

"It was not English of international standard. If the letter was from the Home Ministry and to be sent to the United States, it would be expected to be written in proper English. Even the date on the letter was written in Bahasa Melayu.

"If the letter is genuine, couldn't you get a better person to draft the letter? The language is embarrassing," he told reporters at his office today. Lim was commenting on the December 18 letter by Zahid to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) deputy director Mark F. Giuliano.

Zahid said he had been asked by Phua's Malaysian and American legal teams to write to the FBI over the bureau's suspicion of Phua's involvement in a Hong Kong criminal organisation called "14K".

Phua, 50, a former casino owner in Macau, and his son, are facing charges of illegal bookmaking in Las Vegas, after being arrested by police at the Caesars Palace hotel during the FIFA World Cup in July last year.

An online message found on Phua's computer during a police raid suggested that bets of the alleged operation could total up to HK\$2.7 billion (RM1.22 billion), according to court documents.

"To assist both your department and Mr Phua's legal teams, based on our information, Mr Phua is neither a member nor is he associates with the '14K' triad.

"Moreover, according to our records, Mr Phua has, numerous occasions, assisted the Government of Malaysia on projects affecting our national security and accordingly we continue to call upon him to assist us from time to time and as such we are eager for him to return to Malaysia," Zahid wrote in the letter.

The South China Morning Post, in a report on December 31, broke the news about Zahid's letter.

It was reported yesterday that Zahid's letter to the FBI was withdrawn from a Nevada District Court after Putrajaya objected to it being used for the defence of the accused gambling kingpin.

In a December 29 letter signed by Phua's lawyers David Z. Chesnoff and also lawyers for his son, Thomas C. Goldstein and Richard Schonfeld, they said Zahid's letter had been submitted but after Putrajaya's objection, the submission was withdrawn.

Lim said there is now concern what the minister was doing mixing with gambling kingpins like Phua.

"(People want to know) is that the kind of company a government minister keeps... This affects the image and integrity of the Malaysian government," Lim said, adding that he hoped Zahid would clarify the matter.

Umno lawyer Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah had since explained that Zahid did not vouch for Phua as his letter was merely a response given to Phua's lawyer. – January 6, 2015.

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