

Lawyers wait for Najib's go-ahead to sue former MCA boss
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By V. Anbalagan

Lawyers will wait for instruction from Datuk Seri Najib Razak before deciding whether to file a suit against Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik for allegedly making defamatory remarks against the prime minister, following the expiry of the deadline for the former MCA president to apologise.

Datuk Mohd Hafarizam Harun, who is acting for Najib, said Dr Ling's lawyer had officially written to him last Friday that their client stood by his statement.

"We will have to meet our client (Najib) to take instruction whether to file a suit," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Hafarizam said the content of the letter was similar to what Dr Ling had told the media on October 7, where the former transport minister said he would not apologise for remarks on Najib's handling of state-owned investment vehicle 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

News portal Malaysiakini had quoted Dr Ling on October 3 saying he agreed with his former boss Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, that Najib had "taken the people's money and put it in his own personal accounts".

"I agree with (Dr) Mahathir. Because he (Najib) has taken people's money and put it in his own personal accounts," Dr Ling was quoted as saying at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Ling, also a former MCA president, said this at the Tunku Abdul Rahman University College when he was asked whether he agreed with Dr Mahathir's calls for Najib's resignation.

On October 5, Hafarizam (pic, left) had sent a letter of demand, seeking an apology, retraction and compensation from Dr Ling within seven days, failing which legal action would be instituted. The deadline expired on Monday.

Dr Ling said he was extremely surprised that the contents of the letter were "splashed" all over the media.

"I say to the prime minister, if you choose to sue me, I will defend myself.

"In all humility, I accept your challenge. I look forward to seeing the prime minister take the witness stand, as no doubt he would have to do so if he says his reputation is at stake.

"I want to reiterate that I stand by what I said. I will not apologise," he said in a strongly worded press statement.

Dr Ling backed a recent press conference by Dr Mahathir and five other veteran Barisan Nasional leaders, where they condemned the use of an anti-terrorism law against 1MDB critics, although he himself was not present at the event.

Najib has been implicated in corruption investigations into 1MDB after US-based The Wall Street Journal reported in July that a large sum from a total of US\$700 million was transferred into his personal bank accounts two months before the 2013 general election.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission announced that the money was a donation from a Middle Eastern individual.

The prime minister has also denied using public money, including from 1MDB, for personal benefit, though questions surround the source and purpose of the funds.

Dr Mahathir has repeatedly demanded Najib step down from office, while sacked Umno leader Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan lodged reports in Hong Kong, Switzerland and the United Kingdom for alleged money laundering. – October 15, 2015.

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