

No retraction, no apology, Ling tells Najib
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By Eileen Ng

Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik is standing by his remarks against the prime minister and will not apologise, following a letter of demand from Datuk Seri Najib Razak's lawyers threatening to sue the former MCA president for defamation over remarks on the handling of state investment vehicle 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Dr Ling said he was very surprised to receive the letter from Najib's lawyers accusing him of defaming the prime minister.

He was also 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 made available to The Malaysian Insider today.

On Saturday, news portal Malaysiakini quoted Dr Ling as saying that 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, a former transport minister between 1986 and 2001, had given a speech at the Tunku Abdul Rahman University College when he was asked whether he agreed with Dr Mahathir's calls for Najib's resignation.

Following his remarks, legal firm Hafarizam Wan & Aisha Mubarak had issued a letter of demand on behalf of Najib to Dr Ling at his residence.

The letter asked him to offer an unreserved apology and compensation within seven days, failing which legal action would be instituted.

Najib has been implicated in corruption investigations into 1MDB after US-based The Wall Street Journal reported in July that US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) 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 had 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.

The opposition is also mulling a vote of no confidence against the embattled prime minister when Parliament reconvenes on October 19. – October 7, 2015.

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