

Ling okay with mediation, but wants Najib's presence

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By V. Anbalagan

Former MCA president Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik has agreed to mediation to settle a defamation suit by Datuk Seri Najib Razak, on condition that the prime minister is present during the exercise.

Dr Ling's lawyers said in the event their client was ready for mediation, it would be on the basis that Najib was present to ventilate all issues between themselves.

In a statement tonight, legal firm Ranjit Singh & Yeoh said it was important that truth and transparency be the cornerstone of any discussion, without which there was no point to start the process.

"After all, both the prime minister and Dr Ling were once colleagues serving under the same Cabinet. Otherwise, such mediation will be futile," said the statement.

It was responding to reports yesterday which did not detail what transpired during a case management before High Court judge Datuk John Louis O'Hara in his chambers.

The firm said the judge suggested that both parties explore mediation and Najib's lawyer, Datuk Mohamad Hafarizam Harun, indicated that his client was agreeable to it, but would prefer not to be present.

Dr Ling's lawyers however said that the former transport minister would first like to read the prime minister's reply in response to his defence to the defamation suit, as well as Najib's defence to Dr Ling's counter-claim, before deciding whether he was okay with mediation.

Bernama yesterday reported that the court had proposed that Najib's suit against Dr Ling be resolved through a mediation process.

Najib filed the suit last October after Dr Ling called him unfit to lead Malaysia for receiving some RM2.6 billion into his personal bank accounts, as reported by The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) last July.

In his defence, Dr Ling said the Umno president had failed to disclose the identity of the donor, the source of the funds and how it was utilised.

He said Najib had admitted to receiving the money as a donation on December 8 last year but had not channelled the money to Umno's accounts.

Dr Ling had in October agreed with former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Najib had "taken the people's money and put it in his own personal accounts".

"I agree with Mahathir. Because he (Najib) has taken people's money and put it in his

own personal accounts," he told a press conference.

The prime minister had applied for damages as well as an injunction to stop Dr Ling from repeating the statement.

In his counter-suit, Dr Ling claimed Najib abused the court process and did not pursue any action for defamation against others, including Umno leaders who have repeatedly criticised his conduct and integrity on various occasions.

WSJ reported that US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) was transferred into Najib's personal bank accounts, the largest portion of which was moved two months before the May 2013 general election.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission said the money was a donation from the Middle East.

Najib has denied using public money, including from 1MDB, for personal benefit, though questions were raised over the source and purpose of the donation. – January 12, 2016.

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