

Kit Siang questions if Najib ready for Scorpene deal probe

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DAP parliamentary leader also asks why government has not set up a royal commission of inquiry into the matter like the one established to probe BNM forex losses.

PETALING JAYA: DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang wants to know if Prime Minister Najib Razak is prepared to subject himself to full corruption investigations over the US\$1.1 billion (RM4.71 billion) sale of two Scorpene submarines to Malaysia in 2002.

This followed reports that French investigators had charged two former top executives in a probe into alleged kickbacks from the deal.

“If the government can set up a royal commission of inquiry to investigate the Bank Negara foreign exchange losses some 25 years ago, why is the government not setting up a royal commission of inquiry into corruption allegations in the Scorpene submarine deal fifteen years ago?” the Gelang Patah MP said in a statement today.

Lim asked if this was because Najib himself, who was the defence minister at the time, would be the subject of investigations into the deal.

He also asked if Najib was prepared to present a white paper to lawmakers when Parliament reconvenes on Monday, followed by a wide-ranging debate on the issue.

The two executives charged in the Scorpene case were Philippe Japiot, former chairman of the French naval dockyards unit DCNI, and Jean-Paul Perrier, former chief executive officer of French defence and electronics giant Thales.

A report by French news agency AFP said the two were interviewed in May in connection with corruption and commission allegations.

Japiot has additionally been indicted for “abuse of social assets” and Perrier for “complicity in the abuse of social assets”.

The investigation was launched in 2010 in response to a complaint by Malaysian human rights NGO Suaram.

The complaint centred on allegations that the French submarine maker paid a commission of more than €114 million (RM560 million) to a purported shell company linked to Abdul Razak Baginda, a former close associate of Najib’s.

Lim asked if the issue had been discussed at the weekly cabinet meeting today as there had been ample time for a report to be made.

He also asked if the Attorney-General's Chambers, the police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission were reopening investigations into allegations of corruption connected with the French Scorpene submarine sale in 2012.

The government in June 2012 denied claims of alleged bribery in the deal.

According to Reuters, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who was then defence minister, told Parliament that his ministry had not paid any commissions in the purchase and had followed "established guidelines" to acquire the French Scorpene-class submarines.

He added that the government had no knowledge of the alleged sale of classified defence documents.

"The (defence) ministry has never paid any commission either directly or indirectly to any company in the acquisition of Scorpene submarines," he said.

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