



Chong (front, third right) with Kong (second left), his legal team and supporters at the court complex.

Gist of FB posts was to criticise 'discriminatory' allocation of Covid food aid funds, says Chong

KUCHING: Sarawak DAP chairman Chong Chieng Jen told the High Court here yesterday that the gist of his Facebook posts was to criticise the 'discriminatory' policy of the Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) government in allocating funds for the purchase of food aid during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Testifying as the sixth witness in the defamation suit filed against him by Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian, Chong told his lawyer Michael Kong during examination-in-chief that his posts dated April 15, 2020 and April 18, 2020 were in regards to the RM200,000 allocated to each constituency during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period in April that year.

He said the Batu Kawah Service Centre was allocated a total of RM1 million to manage the purchase of food aid for the GPS-held Batu Kawah constituency, as well as the opposition-held constituencies of Padungan, Batu Lintang, Pending and Kota Sentosa.

"The discrimination in the GPS policy is glaring...", he said.

Chong said he had verified the matter with the Kuching Resident's Office after being informed that opposition assemblymen would not be granted the allocation.

"I was informed that the non-GPS ADUNs (assemblymen) have no right to purchase food aid and thereafter seek reimbursement or direct payment from the divisional disaster management committee for the purchase utilising the RM200,000 allocation.

"For food aid to be distributed to our (opposition) areas, the reimbursement could only be done through the Batu Kawah Service Centre," he said.

In his testimony, Chong also questioned Dr Sim's effectiveness in managing the distribution of the food aid.

"I did not see the plaintiff going to the ground to distribute the food items. In fact, the plaintiff was quarantined since April 3 or 4, 2020 which was announced in the news report.

"Given that the plaintiff was quarantined, it is only fair of me to say that the policy of granting the RM1 million to him or his service centre to manage was not effective to carry out the food distribution exercise to the needy families in the constituencies of Padungan, Pending, Batu Lintang and Kota Sentosa," he said.

In 2020, Dr Sim, who is Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) president and Batu Kawah assemblyman, filed the suit over Chong's allegation that the deputy premier had failed to manage food aid funds worth RM800,000 meant for four opposition-held state constituencies - Padungan, Batu Lintang, Pending and Kota Sentosa.

Besides Kong, Chong is represented by lawyers Chong Siew Chiang, Brenda Chong, and Sharon Lo.

Dr Sim is represented by Shankar Ram, Shemira Adzhar and Lai Eddy.

Presiding over the suit is Judge Dr Alwi Abdul Wahab.