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ACA: Perwaja probe still on

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Anti-Corruption Agency's probe into the RM2.985 billion losses incurred by Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd as at Dec 31, 1995, is still ongoing.

Its director-general, Datuk Ahmad Zaki Husin, said today investigations into the case, which began in October, 1996, had not been completed as it involved a wide scope.

He said the business transactions which occurred during that time included international dealings, which meant there were matters of jurisdiction.

"We must be satisfied whether these transactions were legitimate or otherwise ... the investigation will only end when we are satisfied, one way or the other," added Ahmad Zaki.

He was speaking to reporters at the ACA headquarters in Persiaran Duta after officiating the opening of a basic course for ACA superintendents and assistant superintendents.

In the course of investigations into Perwaja's losses, the ACA had recorded statements from more than 60 people, including its former managing director, Tan Sri Eric Chia.

ACA officers had gone to Japan, Hong Kong and Switzerland to gather evidence relating to a RM76.4 million payment which the company made to NKK Corporation through a non-existent company, Frilsham Enterprises Inc, in Hong Kong.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that a crony of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had amassed RM230 million, Ahmad Zaki said the agency had not received a report on the matter.

Ahmad Zaki also hailed the Anti-Corruption Act 1997 as a success, saying it was a contributing factor towards decreasing corruption cases in the country.

Referring to the agency's statistics last year, where 300 people were arrested for corrupt practices as compared to 334 the previous year, he said the decrease showed that people were more afraid to commit corrupt practices.

This, he said, was due to the heavier fines and jail terms imposed under the act, as compared to the previous act.

Under the new act which came into effect on Jan 8, last year, those found guilty of corrupt practices are liable to between 14 days and 20 years' jail, and a fine of RM10,000 or five times the amount of a bribe, whichever is higher.

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