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Mahathir-Monitor

DR M: SPECIAL BODY SET UP AT TREASURY TO CHECK GOVT CHEQUE FORGERY

LANGKAWI, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- A special body has been set up at the Finance Ministry to check forgery of government cheques, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said all government financial transactions must be recorded periodically according to the specified format.

He said the body would focus its attention on monitoring financial dealings of government departments and agencies, government-owned companies and statutory bodies.

"I want all transactions to be recorded periodically and according to a certain format," he told reporters when asked to comment on the spate of government cheque forgery cases by syndicates in Penang, Melaka, Perlis, Perak and Negeri Sembilan.

At least 26 people have been detained in connection with the cloning of government cheques totalling about RM5 million, including RM3 million from the Penang state government account over the last three years.

The forgeries are believed to have been masterminded by a 30-year-old unemployed who is being sought after by the police.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir held a luncheon meeting with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Fahad Abdullah Mohammed Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, who is here for the ongoing Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA '03) Exhibition.

In JOHOR BAHRU, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the Johor Government would definitely take precautionary measures although there were no cases of government cheque forgery or cloning detected by the State Treasury.

He said the State Financial Officer's Office had been instructed to immediately enforce whatever measures deemed appropriate to ensure forgeries reported in Penang and Melaka would not happen in the state.

"We should learn a lesson from the incidents reported in other states, how it can happen, how it is done so that we can prevent it," he told reporters after opening the State Youth Consultative Council meeting.

"So far, the State Treasury has not detected any forgery of cheques issued by it. I hope there is none," he said when asked to comment on the measures taken by the Johor Government following the forgery of 500 cheques of the Penang state government involving withdrawal of RM3 million.

Yesterday, the Melaka Government also reported a similar forgery case with 173 cheques worth RM1.29 million being cloned.

State Financial Officer Datuk Baderi Dusuki said the state government might consider seeking further cooperation from banks.

"We may ask them to contact us and verify the cheque number first and the amount with the State Treasury when handling cheques for amounts exceeding RM10,000," he said.

In KEMAMAN, Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam said the state government would take legal action against Malayan Banking Berhad (Maybank) if it failed to pay back the RM1.29 million which had been withdrawn after the cheques for the amount were cloned.

He, however, said the court action would be the state government's last resort against the bank to recover the money.

He said the bank had been given a month to refund the money because its negligence had resulted in the loss of the money.

"I've given them a month to refund the money. If they failed, the state government will take up the matter with the Bank Negara," he told reporters after opening a socio-economic survey excellence course.

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