

'Up to GLCs to decide on PM's advertise in Utusan proposal'

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By Lawrence Yong

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak acted openly in backing Utusan Malaysia but government-linked companies (GLCs) can decide for themselves whether the PM's urging to advertise in the newspaper is good to follow.

NONEMinister in the Prime Minister's Department Paul Low said this today when asked by Malaysiakini whether it was all right for Najib, who is also president of Umno, to ask GLCs and government agencies to put more advertising money into the Umno-owned daily.

"He is the PM and he sets the priorities. It's a transparent (decision) but it's favouring some... so not all can agree with the decision," said Low, who is in charge of transparency and good governance.

However, he declined to comment on DAP's rebuttal of Najib's move as a "poorly-disguised bailout attempt (of Utusan) using taxpayers' monies".

Low said that he would only remind GLCs to carry out their fiduciary duties properly.

'I will give my feedback internally'

"GLCs have a responsibility to make sure that they are good stewards and manage their assets and businesses well. Anybody can give a directive...but the GLCs have to judge every decision according to the merit of the case," he said.

Before being appointed to the cabinet by Najib in May, Low was president of the Malaysian chapter of Transparency International and often spoke out against corruption in the government.

He declined to say what advise he would give to Najib in this case of the prime minister's vested political interest in seeing Utusan thrive.

"I will give my feedback internally," Low said.

Najib yesterday launched the new building of the Umno-owned daily and then named a street after the Umno mouthpiece.

In his speech, Najib urged government departments and GLCs to advertise more in the 75-year old newspaper to ensure its long-term survival.

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