

Penang aims to put brakes on 1MDB land deal

MalaysiaKini.com

July 7, 2015

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The Penang government is looking at ways to stop 1MDB's attempt to sell land in Air Itam on the island, in view of the ongoing controversy surrounding the company.

"We have to call for all business activities of 1MDB be caveated immediately," Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng told a meeting of Opposition MPs at Parliament Square in Kuala Lumpur this afternoon.

"As Penang chief minister, I will see if it is within our power to freeze the land deal in the state, as they want to sell their land in Penang. It is up to the other state governments to do so," he said.

Opposition MPs and NGO representatives were at the meeting to discuss the 1MDB controversy and allegations that nearly US\$700 million was transferred into Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's personal bank account.

Since 2013, 1MDB has, through its subsidiaries, been taking over several companies that own land.

Lim had told the press recently that state government approval was still needed for the transfer of ownership of land.

Lim also told the meeting today that he agreed with an earlier speaker, Ambiga Sreenevasan (photo) , that a snap general election should be called following the latest allegations against Najib.

This is because, he said, the matters relate to the last general election.

"I support the call for an election soon," he said. "While we do not know if we are going to win, we want a clean government."

Najib should take leave as his presence would impact the investigation, he added.

The Bagan parliamentarian also suggested the government appoint a renowned and independent international figure to lead the investigation task force if necessary.

Meanwhile, DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang suggested a royal commission of inquiry into 1MDB and Najib be set up.

He suggested Najib's biggest critic, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, chair the inquiry.

Najib has yet to respond clearly if the money had transferred into his private bank account, said the Gelang Patah MP.

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