

Najib's WSJ suit 'remains at status quo'

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A lawyer representing Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in his legal action against United States based financial daily The Wall Street Journal said the situation “remains status quo” as at present.

Lawyer Wan Azmir Wan Majid said this when contacted by Malaysiakini this morning.

"All i am authorised to say is (the situation) remains status quo. We have already received WSJ's reply and it has been widely reported.

Najib's lawyers last month sent a letter to Dow Jones, the owner of WSJ, seeking clarification over two articles published by the financial daily.

The lawyers gave Dow Jones 14 days to reply, which it did just before the deadline expired.

Najib's lawyers in their letter demanded that the publication clarifies its stance on a July 2 news report titled "Malaysia leader's accounts probed" and an opinion piece on July 6 titled "Scandal in Malaysia".

The lawyers wanted WSJ to clarify if it meant the alleged RM2.6 billion in Najib's accounts had come from 1MDB or unknown sources.

When the WSJ story broke, it led the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to issue a statement on concerted efforts by certain individuals to undermine confidence in the country's economy, tarnish the government and remove a democratically elected prime minister.

"These latest claims, attributed to unnamed investigators as a basis to attack the prime minister, are a continuation of this political sabotage," PMO said in a statement posted on its Facebook page.

The uproar caused by the WSJ and Sarawak Report articles resulted in the formation of a special task force comprising the police, Bank Negara, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and then-attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail to investigate the 1MDB imbroglio.

Despite on-going investigations, it led to Gani being suddenly removed as attorney-general and replaced by Federal Court judge Mohamed Apandi Ali. A cabinet reshuffle followed immediately, with Muhyiddin Yassin removed as deputy prime minister and Ahmad Zahid Hamidi taking his place.

The past few days have seen several people from the MACC and the Attorney-General's Chambers being questioned by police for leakages of information.

WSJ: No need to explain

On July 23, Dow Jones replied to Najib's law firm that there was no need for WSJ to explain its stance on reports alleging that RM2.6 billion of 1MDB-linked funds had been deposited into the prime minister's personal bank accounts.

"In your letter you 'seek confirmation as to whether it is [our] position as taken in [The News Article and The Opinion] that [your] Client misappropriated nearly US\$700 million belonging to 1Malaysia Development Berhad'.

"We believe your request is unnecessary as The News Article and The Opinion speak for themselves," Dow Jones' counsel and chief compliance officer Jason P Conti wrote in a letter to the prime minister's lawyers.

Conti said it was quite clear that The News Article is a fair and accurate summary of current events, and The Opinion includes reasonable commentary based on those facts.

"Any suggestion otherwise is misplaced and baseless," he added.

Some lawyers when contacted by Malaysiakini opined that Najib's lawyers could be waiting for further instructions, while another felt the terms used in the response meant the PM would not file a letter of demand, and hence a suit against WSJ.

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