

Don't fall for WSJ report on 1MDB's US\$850m, says DPM

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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today urged the people not to fall for the latest report by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), which cited an unknown source in explaining how US\$850 million was transferred from 1MDB.

"We should not fall for the information of the said media, we should not punish (1MDB) based on unverified source.

"Thus, I feel it is better for us to let the investigating bodies in Malaysia to probe so the truth will be known.

"High-level credentials should be given to the investigating bodies," he said at a press conference.

In its Dec 17 report, the US-based daily said 1MDB fund was sent to "Aabar Investments PJS Ltd", which closely resembles the name of Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Investment Co's (IPIC) subsidiary - Aabar Investment PJS.

WSJ reported the news based on documents reviewed by the publication and those familiar with the matter.

However, Zahid (photo) today made no effort to deny or admit the authenticity of the news.

WSJ had in a few occasions cited sources and documents in its reports on 1MDB. Its July 3 report on RM2.6 billion channelled into Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's private bank accounts turned out to be true.

Meanwhile, Zahid said the government is open to calls to improve the controversial National Security Council Bill 2015 which was passed in Dewan Negara last Tuesday.

"Yes, this is our attitude. This is our stand, we are open about it. Nothing is perfect. If some amendments need to be done... let's see the running of the new Act.

"If there is a hiccup somewhere, then we should sit down with the civil society and NGOs and work together to thrash out the problems faced by the introduction of this Act," he said.

Zahid was asked if the government has any plans to amend the bill as promised by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim.

Bill provides sweeping powers

Malaysian Senators Council (MSM) president Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman had said the bill may be unconstitutional and contravene other laws for the extensive power given to the operation director assigned to a security area.

United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) senator Lucas Umbul said the most qualified person to declare a security area is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, as he is above politics.

Shahidan had defended the bill when winding up at the Upper House. He, however, promised the government will correct any shortcomings in the bill, if there are any.

The bill provides sweeping powers for the National Security Council to deal with security issues and the prime minister has the power declare a security area for a span of six months on the advice of the council.

Once the security area is declared, operation director and security forces will be deployed in the area, and massive powers will be given to them.

The security force will be deployed from the police, its volunteer reserve, the auxiliary police, armed forces and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency.

The force will be protected from being sued in the court.