

MACC panel: Three high-profile cases closed
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The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) operations review and evaluation panel has agreed to close investigations involving three high-profile personalities.

One case involved former MCA president Ong Tee Keat's alleged receipt of RM10 million in donations from Tiong King Sing in 2008.

The second involves an alleged gift in the form of a luxury vehicle received by the wife of Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai.

The third involves alleged graft in Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim's Aidilfitri 'open house' in Bandar Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur, in 2008.

NONEAt a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today, the panel chairperson Hadenan Abdul Jalil (left) explained that the case against Ong was closed because of the lack of witnesses in determining the recipient of the money.

Tiong claimed last year that he had donated the sum to Ong, before the latter was appointed transport minister, sparking claims that this was a form of graft.

The allegation surfaced after Ong, as transport minister, initiated a probe on Port Klang Free Zone turnkey contractor Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, which is owned by Tiong.

The MACC is compelled to explain itself to the panel for review should a prominent case be dropped.

Liow personally bought the Alphard

On Liow, Hadenan said that investigations revealed that the vehicle was personally purchased by the minister and not given in the form of a gift as claimed by the complainant.

NONELiow's wife Lee Sun Loo (right in picture) had been questioned by the MACC for allegedly receiving a Toyota Alphard vehicle, valued at RM500,000, as a birthday gift in January from a company which had won tenders for Health Ministry projects.

"Investigations have shown that he (Liow) did not have any official connection with the contractor and (that) the car was bought by him," said Hadenan.

On allegations that Khalid had abused his post, Hadenan said the claims could not be substantiated.

"We agreed to close this case because the function was attended by members of the public and not just particular individuals," he said.

Though Hadenan did not elaborate on the matter, he may be referring to allegations that Khalid had abused his position in the purchase of 46 sacrificial cattle for distribution at the Bandar Tun Razak Parliamentary constituency.

No need for prosecution powers?

Hadenan appeared nonchalant over calls for the MACC to be given prosecution powers, as suggested by the parliamentary Special Committee on Corruption (SCC), among others, recently.

NONENeither supporting nor rejecting the proposal, Hadenan said that granting the commission prosecution powers would not help improve its public image.

"Members of the panel personally believe that we have good cooperation with the attorney-general's office about making prosecution more effective and to achieve the objectives," he said.

In addition, Hadenan said the panel's annual report, which will be released soon, has suggested that the MACC concentrate on "quality cases and not trivial issues".

"Before (MACC) starts investigations, they should look into cases in our country that involve the most vulnerable sectors for corruption," he said without elaborating.

"(When) people say that the cost of doing business in our country in these sectors are high, it is because of these leakages."

Ong: I'm vindicated

On a related matter, the panel blamed the media for portraying the MACC unfairly, resulting in foreign investors being wary of Malaysia.

"The press always has front pages about the cases we lose, however there is only a small column about the cases that we win. We need the press on our side," Hadenan said.

In an immediate reaction, Ong said that he has been vindicated of an "unfounded and malicious" allegation that was "designed" to ruin his political career.

"Nonetheless, this would in no way deter me from pursuing the PKFZ cause in the interests of our taxpayers though the move might have intimidated many others in the same perspective.

"On the other hand, my libel suit against Tiong on his allegation would certainly continue," said Ong in a posting on his blog.

He hoped that his police will pursue the contents of his reports against Tiong over the same issue.

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