

**PM's Dept slammed for police report against media**  
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Two press freedom groups have condemned the Prime Minister's Department for lodging a police report against three newspapers for revealing details of the Lingam Tape Royal Commission before it was made public by the government.  
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The Star, New Straits Times and Berita Harian are among the newspapers which had earlier published reports for leaking the commission's findings and recommendations.

The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and the Writers' Alliance for Media Independence (Wami) expressed concerned that journalists are being targeted for exposing the royal commission's findings before its official release.

"Given the importance of the issue that has serious implications to the administration of justice in this country, it is imperative that the document be made public. It is ridiculous that the report was restricted or embargoed as the report was already presented to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on May 9," said CIJ executive director V Gayathry.

The police investigation is being carried out under the Official Secrets Act (OSA), which provides for certain government documents to be classified as state's secrets.

Anyone found guilty of violating the Act is punishable with a mandatory imprisonment term of not less than one year but not exceeding seven years.

"Between scoops of such an important issue and the restriction placed under the OSA, any just and open administration should recognise the value of the former," she added.

Gayathry called on the government to retract the police report and urged all journalists and the public to throw their support behind the media which are being probed.

"The OSA must be repealed immediately and replaced by a Freedom of Information law that will ensure the journalists and the public have access to public information," she added.

**Kit Siang ticks off Zaid**

Meanwhile, DAP leader Lim Kit Siang took a swipe at de facto law minister Zaid Ibrahim for ordering the police investigation.

He said that Zaid before he was appointed minister had called for a purge of the culture of secrecy and proposed that 'official secrets' be defined and limited to matters of 'real' national security.

"Instead of invoking the OSA, Zaid should withdraw the police report against the newspapers for performing a national service in publishing findings of the royal commission," he said.

He added that all royal commission reports should be made public the moment they are submitted to the appointing authorities, "without having to go through the sieve or

ensorship of the prime minister or cabinet as they must serve the public and national interests and not the interests of any individual or even the cabinet of the day”.

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