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'Govt advised not to reveal info on RM2.6b donation'

'INAPPROPRIATE': Advice comes from Attorney-General's Chambers, says Zahid

**B. SURESH RAM
AND AZURA ABAS**
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE government was advised that it is not appropriate to reveal information on the RM2.6 billion donation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

The advice came from the Attorney-General's Chambers, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said this in tabling the ministerial explanation on the matter at the Dewan Rakyat here yesterday.

Zahid tabled the explanation at the end of the question and answer and before the start of proceedings involving bills.

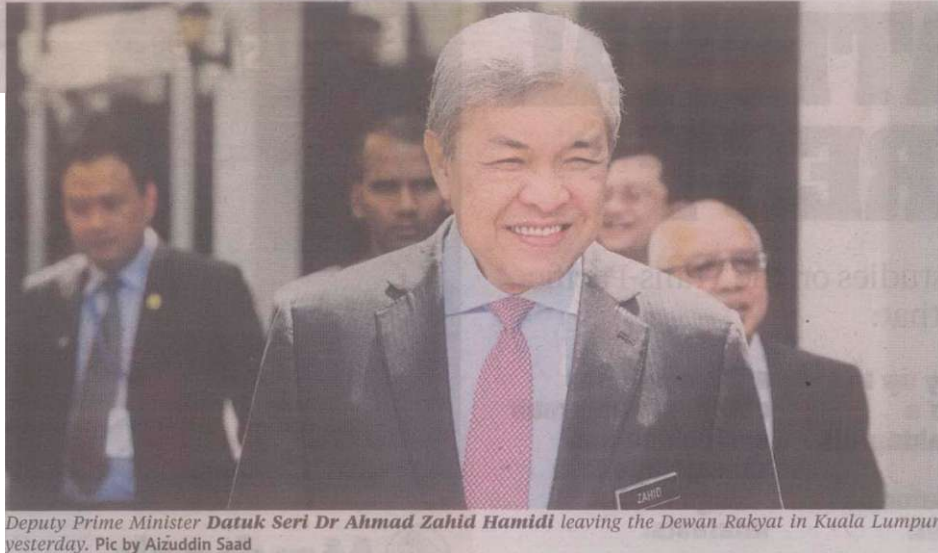
"The attorney-general has advised the government against making any statement related to the issue since it is under investigation.

"Nonetheless, I feel it is necessary to inform that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has identified the donor of the RM2.6 billion political fund and Bank Negara has been told about the account."

He urged everyone to allow the agencies involved in the probe to conduct their investigations in a transparent manner and without being influenced by anybody.

He said any statement issued on the matter could be deemed as sub-judice and could affect the investigation.

"It can also create prejudice among the public."



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi leaving the Dewan Rakyat in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Aizuddin Saad

He said under a democratic system, political parties, including the opposition, were allowed to receive political funding.

Malaysia did not have laws that banned political funding or made it compulsory to declare such funding, he added. "Please stop pointing fingers and pretending that you don't need such funding."

Zahid said Najib had expressed his readiness to regulate political funding.

"Since it has received an overwhelming interest from the public, and with various reactions, the prime minister once again proposed

to regulate political funding and donations by setting up the National Consultative Committee on political funding by taking into account all views."

He said MACC had confirmed that the money was not from strategic development company 1Malaysia Development Bhd.

Later, at Parliament lobby, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azlina Othman Said, in echoing Zahid's explanation and why Najib was not present to explain the issue, said the government was against it.

"We are guided by the A-G be-

cause these are investigations.

"The A-G is the most powerful man. We are guided by his advice."

She said the government decided to issue a statement as the matter was raised in every debate.

Due to that, she said, the best way to deal with the matter was to issue a statement and reply as a ministerial answer in Parliament.

"As far as the government is concerned, the best way to deal with the issue is to answer it through a statement, which is allowed by standing orders." **Additional reporting by Minderjeet Kaur**