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Newspaper	THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Date	27 MAY 2016

IMDB Evidence Wasn't Examined

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WSJ - 27/5/2016
Investigations ordered by Malaysia's leader into graft allegations at a state-development fund have been undermined by political pressure and a lack of transparency, according to documents and interviews with people involved.

Evidence possibly central to the probes was placed off limits or ignored, The Wall Street Journal found. Potentially crucial clues weren't scrutinized. And at least one key figure, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak himself, wasn't interviewed by investigators.

The promise of a thorough and transparent accounting of what happened at the fund, Malaysia Development Bhd., or IMDB, has helped Mr. Najib fend off domestic criticism. Now, though, with six foreign countries investigating allegations of corruption at IMDB, pressure is rising at home for greater transparency.

Mr. Najib in March 2015 pledged an independent probe into IMDB, which he founded to spur economic development. He ordered the auditor general, an investigative agency whose findings are typically public, to compile a report on the fund's activities. And he ordered the contents to be reviewed and debated by the Public Accounts Committee, a parliamentary body.

But the auditor general's report into IMDB, completed in March, was classified under Malaysia's Officials Secrets Act, shielding it from public view.

The auditor general separately provided some information in a presentation to the Public Accounts Committee, said people who were present. Tony Pua, an opposition lawmaker who sits on the committee, said in a statement this month that the auditor general "has specifically confirmed that US\$7 billion of IMDB assets and transactions overseas cannot be verified or traced."

The committee, however,
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