

'RM177m seizure in ex-PM case largest in first quarter'

> Amount does not include funds frozen under Anti-Money Laundering Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001: MACC

KOTA KINABALU: A total of RM177 million in assets, consisting of cash and gold bars, has been seized by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) as part of the probe involving former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

MACC Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said the amount represents the largest seizure recorded by the commission in the first quarter of this year, out of a total of RM483.38 million in assets seized under the MACC Act 2009.

"This RM177 million refers specifically to seizures. Freezing actions under the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001 (Amlatfa) are separate," he clarified at a media conference yesterday.

He was speaking at the launch of Cakna Rasuah, an MACC programme with Sabah media, which was also attended by Sabah Journalists Association president Datuk Muguntan Vanar.

It was also reported that although the

MACC has advocated the use of deferred prosecution agreements, this approach would not apply to the corruption case involving Ismail Sabri.

The approach, which is being applied in other developed countries, defers the prosecution with the condition that there will be a settlement.

"As of now, no," Azam was reported as saying when asked whether deferred prosecution may apply to Ismail Sabri's case when the law comes into force.

He said the MACC has submitted the proposal and is currently awaiting approval from the attorney-general.

The Bera MP is being investigated for alleged corruption and money laundering involving the use of funds for the promotion and publicity of the Keluarga Malaysia programme during his tenure from Aug 2021 to Nov 2022.

The case is being investigated under the MACC Act 2009 and Amlatfa 2001.

Azam said during the same period, asset

freezes under Amlatfa alone amounted to RM548.97 million.

Forfeitures under the MACC Act 2009, Amlatfa 2001 and the Criminal Procedure Code amounted to RM603,363, while compound payments totalled RM412,000.

"During this period, we opened 319 investigation papers, made 401 arrests and charged 146 individuals. We will continue to resolve these cases, focusing not only on securing charges but also on recovering assets."

It was reported that Ismail Sabri is expected to resume providing his statement to the MACC by the end of this month.

This upcoming session will mark the second phase of the investigation, which will focus on the issue of asset declaration, according to his statement.

Azam previously said the first round of questioning, which centred on the discovery of RM170 million in cash and 16kg of gold bars at several "safe houses," had been completed.

Ismail Sabri spent seven days providing a statement to the MACC after being named a suspect in an ongoing investigation involving four of his former senior officers.

The most recent session, held on March 24, lasted five hours, bringing the total time spent on his testimony to over 30 hours.

It was reported that as part of the probe, a money changer was also arrested. - Bernama