

Too much time spent explaining 1MDB to investors, says Guan Eng
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By Looi Sue-Chern

Putrajaya's debt-ridden investment firm 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) is dominating trade talks in Penang's attempts to attract foreign investors, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said.

The fund, which is Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's brainchild, is taking up talk time and is not helping the state government sell Penang to investors as conversation is focused on the fund's RM42 billion debts, said Lim who was recently in the United States and United Kingdom on trade missions.

"Half the time was spent explaining the 1MDB issue even though the Penang government has no part in it... but then Jho Low is from Penang. There have been many headlines linking him with 1MDB," Lim said, referring to businessman Low Taek Jho, also known as Jho Low, who is an associate of the prime minister.

"The issue with the fund attracts attention and we have to spend time to explain and address them," he told reporters at his office today when asked if Penang had been affected by the bad press surrounding 1MDB when its officials, including himself, went overseas to meet investors.

Lim said Penang was still able to sell its name in the UK despite the 1MDB controversy and the falling ringgit because of the popular British drama series "Indian Summers" which was filmed in the state.

"Being chosen as the set for the drama shows that Penang is a beautiful place. We can use that to promote Penang.

"But we cannot run away or deny that we are all part of Malaysia. So we will address the questions put to us," he said.

Lim said the opposition-led Penang government had to continue stressing that it was an administration that did not tolerate corruption.

"We have to distinguish Penang as a state that fights corruption, unlike the federal government that seems to condone it.

"We are the only state government in Malaysia that was praised by Transparency International. We have to stress that," he said.

1MDB has been in the international press as Najib's administration comes under pressure to account for alleged financial wrongdoing involving the state investment firm.

Najib has also been in the spotlight after The Wall Street Journal alleged that US\$700

million had flowed through entities linked to 1MDB before ending up in his personal bank accounts.

Businessman Low is not employed by 1MDB but has described himself as a consultant or adviser. He was however involved in 1MDB's predecessor, the Terengganu Investment Authority, before the federal government turned it into a national strategic investment firm.

Low has been accused of siphoning off US\$700 million from 1MDB as well, through a joint-venture with an oil company called PetroSaudi International, a claim which he has denied. – July 21, 2015.

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