

With WSJ standing by report, Najib's lawyers mull next course of action

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Datuk Seri Najib Razak's lawyers are mulling the next course of action against The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) after the newspaper reiterated that it stood by its report that millions of ringgit had gone into the prime minister's personal bank accounts, his lawyer said.

Najib will be advised on how to proceed once the reply by WSJ and its publisher Dow Jones & Company is studied, lawyer Wan Azmir Wan Majid said to The Malaysian Insider in an SMS.

"I cannot comment until I have viewed the reply," Wan Azmir, who is handling the brief, said, adding that he was currently overseas.

Dow Jones today said it had responded to a request for clarification from lawyers representing Najib, the Malay Mail Online reported, quoting a spokesman for the publisher.

The spokesman added that the publisher stood by the accuracy of its reports.

This means that Najib's next best course of action is to send a letter of demand seeking a retraction and an apology within a scheduled deadline, said lawyer S. N. Nair when asked to comment.

"This is the procedure he has to adopt before filing a defamation suit," he said.

Scrutiny is on what Najib will do next to clear his name against allegations in the WSJ report on July 2 that US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) had moved between entities linked to 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) before ending up in his personal bank accounts.

Najib's critics have urged the prime minister to sue WSJ to disprove the allegations against him.

He has so far denied taking 1MDB funds for personal gain, but has not directly addressed the fund transfers to his accounts.

On Monday, Wan Azmir was reported saying in Malay daily Berita Harian that WSJ and Dow Jones' silence gave the impression of an admission of guilt with regards to whether they were accusing Najib of misappropriating funds.

Wan Azmir had said that if no reply was forthcoming from the paper and its publisher, Najib had a few legal options and that included issuing a letter of demand.

Najib's lawyers have been explaining their legal letter sent to WSJ and its publisher, after the letter was criticised by other lawyers for seeking a clarification rather than for being an outright letter of demand.

Last week, senior lawyer Datuk Hafarizam Harun from the same legal firm said that the WSJ article was not clear whether the money reportedly deposited into the prime minister's accounts was from 1MDB, and said this warranted a clarification if the paper was claiming that Najib had misappropriated funds.

The matter is being probed by a special government task force that is also investigating 1MDB. The members of the task force are the heads of the central bank, the police, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and the Attorney-General.

Najib and his office have denied the allegations, calling it political sabotage. The prime minister also blamed Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad of conspiring with foreign agents to bring down his administration. – July 22, 2015.

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