

**Stop intimidating press, focus on probe into false 1MDB info, says media advocacy group**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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Putrajaya should stop wasting time intimidating the media and focus on investigating allegations of wrongdoing and dubious deals involving state investor 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), a media freedom advocacy group said today.

Gerakan Media Marah (Geramm) reminded the government that the media served public interest and had a duty to unearth alleged corruption and impropriety.

"While integrity and security of commercial data and business transactions are an issue of great concern to all, but when the wider issue of public interest is at hand and if corruption and impropriety are involved, it is contingent upon the media to unearth such issues," Geramm, a loose coalition of journalists, media representatives and activists, said.

The group was commenting on a threat by Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi yesterday that ministry had the power to cancel or revoke publishing permits if the media were found publishing false information.

The minister had singled out The Edge and its owner Datuk Tong Kooi Ong for special mention. The Edge, a business weekly, has published several reports on 1MDB's dealings.

Zahid said the information published might be false following news that data and emails leaked about 1MDB's dealings with PetroSaudi International had been fabricated by a former director of PetroSaudi.

The news about fabricated data was first reported by pro-government daily the New Straits Times (NST) which quoted an anonymous source for private cyber security firm Protection Group International (PGI).

Geramm today said should stop intimidating the media and instead look into claims that the leaked information had been tampered with.

"Zahid had spouted broad hints that media and journalists who reported on the matter may also face the brunt of ongoing investigations, expressing willingness to take action and extradite Malaysians or those in Malaysia if required by Thai investigators," it said.

Instead of shooting the messenger, it added, Putrajaya should ensure it practised greater responsibility and accountability to the public.

"It is no use to try to silence the tale by killing the storyteller."

PKR meanwhile said Zahid's warning to the media was premature as the PetroSaudi

ex-employee, Xavier Andre Justo, had not been proved guilty.

The party's communications director Fahmi Fadzil said being accused of something does not mean that the accusation is true.

"By law, a person must who is charged in court is innocent until proven guilty. The former director (of PetroSaudi) as far as I know, has not even been charged in court.

"To equate the warning on the basis of allegations is premature," Fahmi said in a statement today, and urged the minister to withdraw his warning against The Edge.

Justo was arrested on Koh Samui, Thailand, on Monday and is being investigated for alleged blackmail and fabrication of data and emails regarding PetroSaudi's dealings with 1MDB, which he then leaked to website Sarawak Report.

Justo has denied the allegations, Thai media reported.

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