

Former Umno minister says ex-PetroSaudi director's arrest seems planned, to clear Najib

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By Md Izwan

The arrest of former PetroSaudi International director Xavier Andre Justo appears planned, as if to clear Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's name, former information minister Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin said today.

Zainuddin, who is popularly known as Zam, said there were some disputable sequence of events in how the arrest was highlighted in the pro-government English daily, New Straits Times (NST).

"All this points to a plan to bring the NST reporter to Bangkok to cover the news on Just. NST was the only local media that went there.

"They were brought to Bangkok for the coverage and they are the ones that published it first," he told The Malaysian Insider.

On Thursday, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad also questioned the arrest saying that it was "suspicious" and did not rule out the possibility that it was planned.

He said the Malaysian government may be involved in the arrest in Thailand and that "clever propagandists might be hard at work to blacken my face".

NST, in its front-page report said that Justo had allegedly tampered with PetroSaudi documents which was eventually used by whistleblower site Sarawak Report in its expose on state-owned 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Zainuddin, a former veteran newsman with Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia, said the report made the arrest seemed to be aimed at clearing Najib's name.

"It was all planned, published as though to clear Najib," he said.

Justo is currently in Thai police custody for attempting to blackmail PetroSaudi over its deals with 1MDB.

Thai police on Tuesday had announced the arrest of the 49-year-old at a house in the Thai island resort of Koh Samui.

Justo was reportedly paid some RM15 million to leave PetroSaudi and is now accused of asking for more money in an attempt to blackmail the oil company over its deals with 1MDB.

Thai media reported that Justo has denied this.

Whistleblower site, Sarawak Report has published a series of documents on the PetroSaudi-1MDB joint venture in 2009, which raised questions about 1MDB's dealings and also the involvement of Malaysian tycoon Low Taek Jho.

Criticism has been mounting over the state investment vehicle, established in 2009, which has chalked up debts of up to RM42 billion.

The Auditor-General is currently looking through 1MDB's books, with a preliminary report expected to be submitted to the Parliament this month. – June 28, 2015.

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