

No action against Sarawak Report because Putrajaya believes in media freedom, says minister

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Putrajaya's lenient stance with website Sarawak Report in the name of media freedom has affected Malaysia's image, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said today.

Anifah said the government had not taken any action against the UK-based website even though it had been publishing stories tarnishing the country's image.

"We practice democracy, but some parties still claim we don't give space for free speech," he said.

"Sarawak Report has published many reports, but we have not taken any action," he added.

"Because the people want freedom of speech and freedom of media, we try to understand that," he said during a buka puasa event in Putrajaya today.

Anifah said Putrajaya had not wanted to take action against Sarawak Report because it was concerned about how the public might react.

"But we cannot keep quiet as it involves the country's interests," he said, adding that legal action could be taken against the website.

Sarawak Report has published several exposes on alleged scandals involving Malaysia's leaders, such as former sarawak chief minister Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud, and over government-owned state investment firm 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Among others, the website had exposed the alleged siphoning of money from 1MDB to a company controlled by businessman Low Taek Jho who is an associate of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, as well as other dubious deals 1MDB had been engaged in.

Last week, Sarawak Report and The Wall Street Journal both carried reports that large sums of money to the tune of some US\$700 million had been transferred to Najib's personal bank accounts at AmBank in Kuala Lumpur in five deposits. This allegation is now being probed by a special government task force. – July 8, 2015.

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