

Najib seeks legal experts to act against WSJ, says lawyer
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By V. Anbalagan

Datuk Seri Najib Razak has instructed his lawyers to engage legal experts to study the appropriate action to be taken against The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), which stands by its report that US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) was channelled to the prime minister's personal bank accounts.

Lawyer Datuk Mohd Hafarizam Harun, who met Najib yesterday, said the prime minister left instructions following Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) announcement on Monday that the money came from donors.

"He has asked us to engage legal experts, either here or overseas, with the view of taking appropriate measures against WSJ," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur today.

Hafarizam said he would now work towards identifying the experts, including a Queen's Counsel in the United Kingdom and senior attorney in the United States before deciding on the next course of action.

"This is like getting a second legal opinion on WSJ's online and print publications."

The lawyer said the matter would be treated with urgency in light of MACC's findings that the funds had come from a donor, and in view of WSJ's refusal to provide clarification.

"My client has six years to file a defamation suit against WSJ in Malaysia but we are also looking into other courses of action as soon as possible."

The Malaysian Insider last week reported that Hafarizam and another lawyer Datuk Firoz Hussein Ahmad Jamaluddin, from the legal firm Hafarizam Wan & Aisha Mubarak, had gone overseas on an exploratory mission in relation to their client's case against WSJ.

This followed WSJ's refusal to respond to their request for a clarification as to whether the paper's report on the money in Najib's accounts meant that they were accusing Najib of misappropriation of funds.

WSJ and its publisher, Dow Jones & Company, instead reiterated that they stood by the news reports and a subsequent opinion piece, which they added, were clear enough in themselves.

MACC's statement on Monday night confirmed that the funds had gone to the prime minister's account, but were not from state-owned strategic investor 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and were a donation instead.

MACC, however, did not identify the donors nor did they disclose how the RM2.6 billion was spent.

Various lawyers interviewed by The Malaysian Insider have said Najib has the option of filing the suit in Malaysia or elsewhere where the report was published.

A delay in the prime minister's move to seek legal recourse would be seen as if the newspaper had been accurate in its July 2 report and July 6 opinion piece, which it said were based on documents sourced from Malaysian investigators.

Najib's critics have urged the prime minister to sue WSJ to disprove the allegations against him and he is being watched closely to see how he will respond. – August 6, 2015.

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