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'No decision yet on calling Latiff'

MACC: We need more time to check various sources on the LCS probe

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PUTRAJAYA: Graft investigators have yet to decide whether to call Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Latiff Ahmad over his alleged links with the littoral combat ship (LCS) controversy.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said the matter was still being looked into.

"We are still investigating. I cannot comment just yet. We need to check," he said.

On Aug 22, PKR deputy president Rafizi Ramli alleged that companies

linked to the second wife of a former deputy defence minister were involved in the LCS scandal.

Rafizi had linked one "Zainab Mohd Salleh" to an offshore company with units incorporated in tax havens such as Malta and Labuan.

The declassified forensic report on LCS scandal involving Boustead Heavy Industries Corp Bhd (BHIC) named a couple, Abdul Latiff Ahmad and Zainab Mohd Salleh, as the individuals linked to Alizes Marine Ltd.

Dr Latiff has since denied that any of his family members were involved in the LCS project and lodged a police report over the claims.

Asked on the latest development into the probe, Azam said investiga-

tors needed more time as it was not just a matter of governance.

"We are also looking if there are elements of criminality involved in the LCS case. We need more time to probe, including if we need to call witnesses from abroad," he said after a MACC law enforcement accredited programme convocation held here yesterday.

The PAC report presented to Parliament on Aug 4 said some RM1.4bil in government allocation for the LCS project signed in 2014 was used for other purposes, including cost overruns.

Meanwhile, the French government is said to have given its commitment to ensure that the LCS project becomes a priority for all stake-

holders.

Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera (LTAT) chief executive officer Datuk Ahmad Nazim Abdul Rahman, who disclosed this, said the commitment was conveyed in a letter to Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

"Naval Group, a holding company of the French Government, is a company that designed the LCS ship and is the main anchor of the 43 European firms involved in the project."

"Renegotiating with these companies is a complicated process that requires government-to-government (G2G) relations," he said in a statement yesterday.

He said the supporting statement by the French government showed a

commitment that all stakeholders were working together to ensure the completion of the LCS project.

Ahmad Nazim added that the Boustead Naval Shipyard (BNS) board had also decided to cancel the project's contract award letters to Contraves Advance Devices Sdn Bhd (CAD) and Contraves Electrodynamics Sdn Bhd (CED) which were worth RM3.4bil.

"Both companies are the 'middle-man' that are currently being investigated for various allegations of corruption and violations of the law."

"This decision will enable BNS to negotiate directly with production companies and at the same time reduce the overall construction cost," he said.

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Wee: Projects still on track

Weakened ringgit won't affect public transportation efforts

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KULAI: Ongoing public transport projects including the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) are not affected by the weakening of the ringgit, says Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

He said the ECRL project was already more than 30% into its contract and was on track to meet its Jan 1, 2027 completion date.

"The costs involved in such contracts have been fixed from the start so the value of the ringgit will not affect the commencement of the projects.

"In fact, there are 1,076 project sites in the ECRL, big and small, that are running concurrently," he told

reporters after launching the Johor MCA convention here yesterday.

He said other projects like the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) 2, MRT 3 which was still in the tendering process, Gemas-Johor Baru Electrified Double Track project, as well as the Johor Baru-Singapore Rapid Transit System Link (RTS Link), were also ongoing.

"The RTS Link is more than 20% completed overall. I will be having a discussion with the Singapore government in the next one or two days to talk about the technical issues of the project.

"Things that fall under the bilateral agreement of the project such as the relocation of Public Utilities Board utilities will also be discussed," he added.

Dr Wee said the RTS Link was on track for completion by Dec 31, 2026, and for it to commence operation on Jan 1, 2027.

With a capacity of 10,000 passengers per hour each way, the RTS Link is set to provide easy and comfortable transportation between Johor Baru and Singapore in just five minutes.

On a separate matter, Dr Wee said the ministry had allowed Class D driving licence holders to drive trucks with unladen weight of up to 4,000kg, up from the previous limit of 3,500kg, with immediate effect. This will allow Class D driving licence holders to continue driving the vehicles without having to take the Class E driving licence, which allows the holder to drive vehicles

up to 7,500kg unladen.

"I received feedback from a number of industry players about their pickup truck drivers, who hold a Class D driving licence, getting fined for driving vehicles that weighed 3,600kg or 3,800kg unladen.

"This has caused problems for employers.

"As such, the ministry has decided to give special permission to assist industry players in bringing down their transportation costs and ease the hiring of drivers with a Class D driving licence, especially when the country is undergoing economic recovery.

"I believe this will help small and medium enterprises and facilitate their business and even create more job opportunities," he added.