



Speaking after the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau released a statement saying that Transport Minister S. Iswaran is assisting with an investigation, Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said he and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong are "fully committed" to keeping and preserving the trust that the people have in the Government. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

We will not sweep anything under the carpet: DPM Wong

Govt will maintain tough stance against corruption, he says in wake of case involving Iswaran

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The Government and the People's Action Party will not sweep anything under the carpet, even if the disclosure is potentially embarrassing or damaging, said Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on Wednesday.

Speaking to the media, he stressed that he and Prime Minis-

ter Lee Hsien Loong are "fully committed" to keeping and preserving the trust that the people have in the Government.

His comments came after the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) released a statement on Wednesday morning saying that Transport Minister S. Iswaran is assisting with an investigation into a case that the anti-graft body had uncovered.

Mr Wong said: "We will maintain a tough, zero-tolerance stance against corruption. We will continue to uphold stringent standards of honesty, integrity and probity that Singaporeans expect of their political leaders."

He added: "We will investigate all

cases that come up and, whichever way the facts eventually fall, they will be taken to their logical conclusion."

In May, the CPIB had updated PM Lee on an investigation it was doing on an unrelated case, DPM Wong revealed, adding that he was also kept in the loop.

When the CPIB updated PM Lee on July 5, it raised the need to interview Mr Iswaran as part of further investigations.

Within a day, on July 6, PM Lee gave his concurrence to the director of the CPIB to open a formal investigation. This started on Tuesday.

Mr Wong said he knows Singaporeans are concerned about the

matter, but was unable to provide any more information.

He asked that the investigation be allowed to run its course, and said that people should refrain from any further speculation at this juncture.

"But what I would say is that this is concrete proof of how we do things in Singapore and how our system works," he added.

"We have always upheld a clean and incorrupt system of government, and our track record on this over the decades is clear and evident to all."

The CPIB will put out its findings in due course when they are ready, DPM Wong added.

He said: "I can assure everyone that CPIB will do a full, thorough and independent investigation on this case."

PM Lee has asked Mr Iswaran to take leave of absence from his ministerial and MP duties until the investigation is complete.

In Mr Iswaran's absence, Senior Minister of State for Transport Chee Hong Tat will be Acting Minister for Transport.

On June 28, it was revealed that a CPIB probe, ordered by PM Lee, had found no evidence of corruption or criminal wrongdoing in the rentals of Ridout Road state properties by ministers K. Shanmugam and Vivian Balakrishnan.

CASE DRIVEN BY CPIB

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LAWRENCE WONG, on the difference between the Ridout Road investigations and the current probe.

The findings were submitted to Parliament by PM Lee, together with a report of a review he had asked Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean to conduct.

The CPIB said then that it found no preferential treatment given to the ministers and their spouses, and no disclosure of privileged information in the processing of the rental transactions involving two black-and-white bungalows near Queensway.

That the CPIB was investigating the matter was not made public, and the ministers were not asked to take a leave of absence.

Asked about the difference between the Ridout Road investigations and the current probe, DPM Wong said: "I can understand why questions are asked... but the two cases are very different."

"For the Ridout case, there were questions raised in public, including various allegations online about the two ministers," he said.

And while the Singapore Land Authority had already put out a statement to say that the transactions complied with all of the procedures, questions continued to be raised, including in Parliament, he added.

The two ministers themselves also wanted and asked for an independent review of the matter.

PM Lee agreed and asked the CPIB to investigate, and the investigations eventually concluded that there was no wrongdoing on the part of the ministers.

The findings were published and there was a full accounting of the matter in Parliament, DPM Wong said.

"This case is different. This case is completely driven by CPIB from the beginning; there was no public complaint," he said.

It was the CPIB that discovered the matter through its initial findings and investigations, and it felt that there was a need to interview Mr Iswaran as part of further investigations, he added.

PM Lee agreed that formal investigations should proceed and that is why he asked Mr Iswaran to take a leave of absence, DPM Wong said.

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