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News

AG's Dept divided on filing charges against Ranil

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By Ranjith Padmasiri

Two different opinions have been put forward within the Attorney General's Department on indicting former President Ranil Wickremesinghe on his alleged misappropriation of Rs. 16.6 million in state funds during a visit to the UK.

The different opinions relate to whether there is sufficient evidence for an indictment or if the evidence is insufficient based on the CID investigations on the matter.

The Sunday Times learns that Deputy Solicitor General (DSG) Wasantha Perera, who had been supervising the probe for the AG's Department, has stepped down from these responsibilities owing to differences of opinion regarding the investigation. DSG Perera, who had also been in charge of the investigation into former President's Secretary Saman Ekanayake in relation to the same case, had been of the opinion that investigations have not revealed sufficient evidence to charge either Mr Wickremesinghe or any other individual over the case.

In a situation where there is no evidence to substantiate the primary criminal charge against Mr Wickremesinghe, DSG Perera had opined there is no possibility of charging Mr Ekanayake for aiding and abetting the same crime. The DSG has also submitted a six-page report to

AG Parinda Ranasinghe outlining why criminal charges could not be brought against Mr Wickremesinghe or any other individual based on available evidence and investigation extracts.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Dileepa Peiris, who is the probe's lead supervising officer, has, however, submitted an opinion contrary to that of DSG Perera, informing the AG that criminal charges can be filed against Mr Wickremesinghe based on the available evidence. CID investigators handling the probe have also backed ASG Peiris's opinion.

In his report, though, DSG Perera has pointed out that transiting through the UK when travelling from Cuba to New York and on to Sri Lanka was nothing new for Mr Wickremesinghe, and that he would have had to have a stopover in the UK irrespective of whether or not he received an invitation letter from the University of Wolverhampton.

He has also raised concerns over the CID team travelling to the UK without first obtaining Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) from UK authorities under provisions of the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act to investigate whether the invitation letter reportedly sent to Mr Wickremesinghe by the University of Wolverhampton to attend his wife's graduation ceremony was genuine. Failure to obtain an MLA had prevented the CID team that travelled to the UK from obtaining a statement regarding this invitation letter, DSG Perera has observed in his report.

Along with his counter opinion, ASG Peiris has also submitted to the AG an 11-page report compiled by State Counsel Samadari Piyasena after analysing the extracts in relation to the probe into Mr Ekanayake. Ms Piyasena has opined there is enough evidence to arrest the former president's secretary.

Meanwhile, the Sunday Times learns that the CID has still not responded to a letter sent by the AG's Department asking it to submit extracts of further investigations conducted by a CID team which travelled to the UK.

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