

# RM40 million returned to Sabah

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has already returned to the State government around RM40 million of the money seized during the ongoing Sabah watergate scandal investigations.

MACC chief Tan Sri Azam Baki said more than RM53 million had been presented as evidence for the trial, and they would seek forfeiture to return the rest of the money to the State government.

Azam said they are currently in the midst of a forfeiture process while awaiting the outcome of the trial, and they will provide regular updates on the trial and investigation's developments.

"I do not blame those who questioned whether we will return the seized money. Maybe they just did not see how the money was returned.

"What I am sure of, however, is that MACC has already started returning it back to the Sabah government.

"We have already given back around RM40 million and hopefully we can return the rest once the trial concludes," he told reporters after closing an Institute of Higher Learning (IPTA)-level anti-corruption debate competition at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here on Thursday.

During a recent parliamentary sitting, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had inquired



Azam (third from right) and Kasim (fourth from right) posing with the competition's winners.

whether the RM6 million recovered by MACC from the Sabah watergate scandal would be returned after the conclusion of the case.

Anwar had said that he would direct MACC to give an explanation on where the money had gone to and why follow-up actions were not being taken, at the same time requesting that the agency carry out their duties with transparency.

Meanwhile, Azam had commended the Sabah government for giving full cooperation to MACC in their effort to fight corruption.

He gave an example of a recent case where MACC remanded six individuals believed to be part of a gold mine scam involving RM25 million.

Azam said the State government had also taken its own initiative to improve the integrity of its officers to ensure that Sabah is free from corruption.

"Because they have shown an interest in fighting corruption, MACC has actually lent two of our officers to Sabah.

This is so we can improve the integrity of the state and it is not often that we would lend our officers just like that," he said.

A team from Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) emerged victorious in the anti-corruption debate competition.

The four-man team consisting of Shakimi Haikal Bin Shamsul Bakri, Nur Izzah Nasuha Binti Zulmuksah, Emmed Erwan Shah and Syarful Asrak Bin Muhammad Sanusi, brought home the grand prize of RM12,000 after winning the hearts of the judges in the annual contest.

The first runner-up is from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), namely Muhammad Iman bin Azhar, Sharifah Umairah Syed Mustaffa, Hafiz Hafizi

Norependi and Zal Hasmi Mohd Roslan, who won RM6,000 cash prize.

The Best Overall Debater of the competition was Muhammad Iman from UKM while the Best Finalist Debater was Nur Izzah from UTP, with each of them receiving RM1,500 in cash prizes.

Azam commended the efforts of all the participants.

He said IPTA students need to be shaped to follow the law in order to create a country that is free from corruption as well as citizens with high discipline and integrity.