

Select committee to meet as scheduled, but ...
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Beh Lih Yi

Barely 24 hours after announcing that its meeting on Monday has been cancelled, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity said today that it will proceed as scheduled.

However, Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) director-general Zulkipli Mat Noor and whistleblower Mohamad Ramli Manan will not appear before the committee as planned.

It will instead review the decision made by committee chairperson Bernard Dompok to call off the meeting, said committee member Lim Kit Siang.

"I sent him (Dompok) a fax this morning to ask him to review the cancellation, he later agreed to proceed with the meeting to let committee members decide on whether we should shall call the duo (Zulkipli and Ramli)," he added when contacted.

Lim, who is also the Parliamentary opposition leader, said an official notice has been sent out to inform committee members about the latest decision.

Despite numerous attempts, Dompok could not be reached for comment.

Explosive allegations

On Feb 27, the committee decided to call in Zulkipli and Ramli when a series of explosive allegations surfaced against the ACA chief.

The allegations, ranging from corruption to sexual assault, were contained in a report penned by Ramli, who is the former Sabah ACA director, last year.

The report was made public by an anti-corruption watchdog last week. Zulkipli, a former high-ranking police officer, has since denied the allegations.

The police are currently investigating the corruption allegations while Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail said previously that police investigations in the past found no grounds for prosecution concerning the sexual assault charge.

In an immediate response to the cancellation of the meeting yesterday, Lim had described it as a 'unilateral' decision by Dompok.

In a brief statement, Dompok (photo) - who is also minister in the Prime Minister's Department - said the move to cancel the meeting was due to 'latest developments' concerning the case.

He cited police investigations and a legal suit filed by Ramli against six relevant parties on Wednesday as the grounds for the cancellation.

Dompok also claimed that the cancellation was made based on a "majority decision"

from committee members but Lim questioned this as no formal meeting was called.

Was he pressured?

The opposition leader asked if Dompok had been 'pressured' to call off the meeting since both Zulkipli and Ramli have expressed their willingness to appear before the committee.

In a statement earlier today, Lim had raised the question again.

"Could it be that despite public claims of preparedness to appear before the committee by Zulkipli and Ramli, this is not really the case?"

"If so, who could it be, Zulkipli or Ramli, who is unwilling to appear before the committee?" he asked.

Lim urged the duo to publicly reaffirm their stand to appear before the committee again.

"Ramli would not have the influence to force the cancellation of the meeting even if he is unwilling to appear but Zulkipli would have the leverage to cause the cancellation," he argued.

When contacted, Ramli reiterated that his prepared to appear before the commission.

"Of course I will go (to the meeting) if they decide to call me," he said.

Zulkipli could not be reached for comment as his aide said the ACA chief was attending a function.

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