

Opposition seconds call for independent body on KLIA2

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Pakatan Rakyat is backing the proposal to set up an independent body to specifically probe the many delays and ballooning cost of the new low-cost carrier KLIA2 terminal.

Questioning why acting Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein has been "silent as a mouse" over the whole fiasco, DAP publicity secretary Tony Pua (left) urged the minister to also support the call by Air Asia chief executive officer Aireen Omar yesterday.

Aireen had suggested the body, should it be formed, evaluate three key points - the project's progress, completion date and total cost.

"Unless the true cause of the delay is made known, AirAsia feels there may be more finger pointing (against AirAsia or contractors) which will do nothing towards the completion of the project," she had said.

The call came after Malaysia Airports Holding Berhad (MAHB) in early May admitted to the delays in the construction of the controversial terminal.

It blamed the delay on non-delivery of parts by contractors, and said it will impose liquidated and ascertained damages (LAD) on them.

In a statement today, Pua also brought the transport minister to task for the ministry's involvement in the matter and called for Hishammuddin's immediate intervention.

"As the transport minister with direct purview over Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB), Hishammuddin (right) must step in immediately to resolve this protracted scandal and bring to task all those who are responsible for the embarrassment to the nation, and the sheer waste of public funds," he said.

Since the project was first tendered in 2009, it was hampered by numerous problems, causing cost to escalate more than 100 percent from RM1.7 billion to RM4 billion last year.

These also caused the completion date, initially slated to be September 2011, to be deferred indefinitely with MAHB saying it will now follow the date set by the

contractor.

What will Long do?

Pua also questioned the role played by ministry secretary-general Long See Wool, who also sits on the MAHB board of directors as well as its board procurement committee and board risk management committee.

"Therefore unless the secretary-general... himself decides to say that he knows absolutely nothing about what is going on in the KLIA2 fiasco, the ministry cannot deny culpability in the entire debacle."

NONEHe expressed fear that Malaysian travelers will become the "ultimate losers", made to pay higher airport taxes so that MAHB may repay higher debts incurred due to increased construction costs.

"This conundrum of higher debt will also result in a conflict of interest for Long and the ministry.

"The question will be raised as to whether as a board member of MAHB, will Long support the increase in airport taxes to help MAHB pare down its debt and raise its profitability, or will he take on the regulator's role of suppressing airport taxes to protect the interest of ordinary Malaysians as well as our competitiveness as the hub for low-cost carriers in the region?"

Hishammuddin, Pua said, must also explain why the contract of MAHB managing director Bashir Ahmad Abdul Majid was extended for yet another year, despite his failure to oversee the "single largest project by MAHB during his reign".

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