

Najib's manoeuvre cripples 1MDB probes
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The removal of Abdul Gani Patail as attorney-general as well as the cabinet reshuffle points in the direction of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak consolidating his position amidst the raging 1MDB imbroglio.

Najib's move dealt a blow to both the investigations into 1MDB by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the special task force.

On the PAC front, the committee's chairperson Nur Jazlan Mohamed was appointed as deputy home minister, while three other PAC members were also appointed to the government.

This would mean that Nur Jazlan can no longer helm the bipartisan PAC, which is also investigating allegations surrounding 1MDB.

In addition, the reshuffle means that half of BN's eight representatives in the PAC would have to relinquish their membership should they accept the cabinet positions.

Nur Jazlan, the Pulai MP from Umno, is often seen as uncompromising with regard to the PAC investigation and has on numerous occasions defended fellow PAC member and DAP lawmaker Tony Pua amidst attacks.

Pua has been criticised for targeting 1MDB and calls have rung out for him to resign on grounds that he has not been impartial on the matter.

Nur Jazlan was quoted by the Malay Mail Online as saying that the appointments mean the PAC's investigation on 1MDB is stalled as its new members can only be appointed at the next Parliament sitting.

However, Nur Jazlan did not state whether he was accepting the appointment.

Previously, he had reportedly said that he would prefer to oversee the committee's 1MDB probe to its conclusion before taking on any cabinet position.

Task force may hit brick wall

On another front, the sacking of Abdul Gani also crippled a separate investigation into 1MDB, led by the special task force.

Among others, the task force was probing claims that RM2.6 billion was deposited into Najib's private bank accounts.

Though it was claimed that Gani's term in office expired due to "health problems", the

former AG himself appeared to be in the dark about the matter.

Abdul Gani was only due to retire in October. He was replaced by former federal court judge Mohamad Apandi Ali.

Abdul Gani had helped coordinate the legal aspect for the special task force, which comprises the police, Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission and Bank Negara.

The special task force's investigation will be rendered moot if the new attorney-general refuses to proceed with the case as he is the sole person that controls all prosecution powers.

Najib not only crippled both investigations into 1MDB but also purged those who criticised his handling of 1MDB including Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and Rural and Regional Development Minister Shafie Apdal.

Muhyiddin has been a vocal critic of the 1MDB issue and even revealed how the prime minister ignored his advice on the matter.

Several names included in the new line-up are known to be Najib's supporters, including Salleh Said Keruak, who has been appointed as the new communication and multimedia minister.

Salleh, who is the Sabah state assembly speaker, has consistently defended Najib on his blog.

Following this apparent move to strengthen his position in the government, the question is how Umno would react to the changes.

After all, Muhyiddin is the party deputy president and commands a strong support base.

More importantly, what would former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Najib's archnemesis, do next?

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