

PAC grills Arul Kanda again, media kept outside
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Journalists were barred this morning from entering the Parliament compound to cover the Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) hearing into 1MDB, at which 1MDB president Arul Kanda Kandasamy is slated to testify today.

Police on duty at the main gate to the Parliament complex told the media that they were not allowed to enter the compound today.

"This is the instruction from the highest authority. I don't know the reason," a policeman said when asked by the startled journalists.

The media personnel were forced to park their vehicles outside and wait under the hot sun.

Malaysiakini sent a query to PAC chairperson Hasan Arifin by SMS as to why the journalists have been barred and Hasan is yet to reply.

However, PAC deputy chairperson Dr Tan Seng Giaw has confirmed that Hasan did not agree to allowing members of the media in the Parliament building.

This came after Hasan confirmed on Thursday that the PAC would not get a copy of auditor-general's final report on 1MDB.

PAC has never before, under the chairmanship of Nur Jazlan Mohamed, barred reporters from covering press conferences.

Today is the second time Arul Kanda (*photo*) is being called before PAC to testify on the scandal-mired 1MDB issue.

The last time he appeared before the PAC was Dec 1, and he was grilled for five hours.

The media was allowed to cover the previous proceeding, when Arul Kanda testified for the first time.

PAC, under the leadership of the Rompin lawmaker, seems to shun media attention after the "[cari makan](#)" statement on Nov 18, when Hasan was asked if PAC would call Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to testify.

A week later, however, he rescinded his decision not to hold press conferences.

Latest expose by WSJ on 1MDB

The media also turned up today to get Arul Kanda to respond to the [latest expose](#) by the US-based *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ).

WSJ claimed that 1MDB sent at least US\$850 million last year to an offshore entity formed to appear as if it was owned by an Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund.

"A 1MDB unit transferred at least US\$850 million via three transactions last year to a British Virgin Islands-registered company with a name that made it look like it was controlled by IPIC (International Petroleum Investment Co), according to wire transfer documents viewed by the Journal (WSJ) and two people familiar with the matter.

"The 1MDB fund sent the money to 'Aabar Investments PJS Ltd' which closely resembles the name of IPIC's wholly-owned subsidiary Aabar Investments PJS, the wire documents show," reported WSJ.

Both 1MDB and Arul Kanda have yet to directly respond to the matter.

The state-owned fund only brushed this off as "an old and recycled allegation" used as a campaign to malign them.

Both Arul Kanda and Hasan (*photo*) did not stop their cars to talk to the members of the media who tried to approach them after the hearing concluded in the afternoon.

Only PAC members William Leong and Tony Pua stopped to respond to the media on the latest development.

Leong said the PAC was done with questioning Arul Kanda, who took over 1MDB's management this year to resolve its debt problem.

"According to PAC's terms of reference, we focus on the governance to determine how the problems arose," said Leong.

"The two days (of questioning) with Arul were for us to find out how the debts would be resolved.

"We also urged the (PAC) chairman to call those who were in charge when the debts were incurred," Leong said.

1MDB chairperson will be at next session

Pua said 1MDB chairperson Lodin Wok Kamaruddin and former chairperson Mohd Bakke Salleh would appear at the next PAC proceeding, on Jan 19 and 20.

"Some members also demanded that former president and CEO Shahrol Azrah Ibrahim Halmi, former CEO Hazeem Abdul Rahman and few others be recalled before the PAC. Shahrol had previously been interviewed for two days," he said.

Bakke, who resigned from 1MDB in 2009, was supposed to appear at a hearing held in August.

"However, the PAC chairperson has yet to decide," Pua said.

"As for Arul Kanda, he answered some of the questions we put to him today, while some questions he evaded.

"The answers given in the PAC were incomplete, but this is my view, not PAC's.

"Most importantly, we want to know what happened before him (before Arul Kanda took office), but he spoke mostly on (1MDB's) future plans," Pua added

Both Leong and Pua disagree with the way the new PAC head Hasan treated the media.

"It is regrettable that the journalists had to wait outside the Parliament gate. This has been unprecedented in a PAC meeting.

"As PAC members, we have no cause to restrict and stop media coverage," said Pua.

Leong said he would continue to raise with Hasan the issue of not barring media coverage.

Traditionally, the PAC chief will brief the media after the hearing, the Selayang parliamentarian added.

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