

Kini Roundup: Dr M flayed over Najib asset freeze, Good Star missing in PAC report
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Kini Roundup

Here's a recap of major headlines yesterday you may have missed.

Mahathir flayed over Najib asset freeze

Najib Abdul Razak's press secretary Tengku Sariffuddin Tengku Ahmad dismissed allegations that the RM2.6 billion in prime minister's bank accounts came from 1MDB as a lie and accused former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad of trying to unseat a democratically-elected government.

Meanwhile, Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Deputy Minister Tajuddin Abdul Rahman said Najib was being victimised by Mahathir. He lambasted the former PM for jumping the gun in seeking to freeze assets belonging to Najib.

Another minister also rushed to Najib's defence. Multimedia and Communications Minister Salleh Said Keruak attacked Mahathir for using the pretext that his actions are for the good of Umno when this is not the case.

The flurry of statements from the pro-Najib camp came after Mahathir filed a court injunction to "freeze or prevent the prime minister from transferring, reducing (withdrawing) or dealing with assets worth RM2.642 billion", as well as an application to compel Najib to itemise all his assets.

Good Star gone AWOL in PAC report

Opposition members of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) have accused their committee chairperson Hasan Arifin of editing the PAC report on 1MDB without their approval, claiming that he removed references to Jho Low-linked firm Good Star.

They also cited Section 20 of the Houses of Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act which states that those who give false testimony to the House or to any House committee can be charged under Section 193 of the Penal Code.

But the lawmakers, who held the press conference at Parliament lobby, were booted out by Senate president Abu Zahar Ujang since the Dewan Rakyat was not in session.

Responding, Hasan maintained that the deletion of two sentences involving Good Star in no way affect the report by PAC, adding that the sentences were deleted because of "unclear status or (the matter is) being investigated".

Grace period for 1MDB before default

Facing the risk of a bond default, 1MDB attempts to resolve the US\$50 million payment after it was given a five-day grace period. 1MDB president and executive director Arul Kanda Kandasamy said he expected the interest payment to be made.

Credit ratings agency Moody's Investor Service warned 1MDB's plan to reduce its massive debt is now in doubt following the announcement by the Abu Dhabi-based International Petroleum Investment Company (IPIC) that its obligation in the rescue deal had been terminated, and this may lead to the lowering of Malaysia's rating.

WSJ claims fake Aabar source of RM2.6b

In another expose, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) claimed that the US\$3.5 billion which 1MDB wired to a British Virgin Island-based company bearing a similar name to IPIC's subsidiary Aabar Investments PJS, but having no links with the Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund, was the source of the US\$681 million that went into Najib's bank accounts.

Commenting on the report, former Bar Council president Ambiga Sreenevasan said the latest news reports suggest that unknowing Malaysians were the real donors of the RM2.6 billion to Najib and not any Saudi royal.

More Kini bites

The WSJ's series of reports on alleged financial scandals linked to Najib and state-owned fund 1MDB made it on the Pulitzer Prize nomination list in the International Reporting category. However, it did not win the coveted prize.

Malaysia Airlines Bhd (MAB) announced its chief executive officer and managing director Christoph Mueller will quit in September, well before the end of his three-year contract.

Malaysiakini's special report on Malaysian highways looks at the grim outcome of the privatisation agenda under which the government awarded concessions to highway companies that build and operate the highways.

Armed with cardboard cut-outs of ostriches, the Malaysian chapter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) staged a protest outside the swanky Pavilion Kuala Lumpur shopping mall, urging the wives of politicians, as well as Malaysian celebrities, not to purchase luxury handbags from Hermes and Prada that use ostrich skin.

Looking ahead

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng will respond to more leaked documents and allegations by Malaysia Today blog on the Jalan Pinhorn bungalow case.

Suhakam to appraise the country's key human rights issues in conjunction with the end of the current term of its commissioners.

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