

Select committee to meet duo next Thursday
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Beh Lih Yi

Members of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity today voted against the chairperson's move to call off a hearing involving Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) chief Zulkipli Mat Noor and whistleblower Mohamad Ramli Manan.

Chairperson Bernard Dompok (photo, right) told reporters after a 90-minute meeting in Parliament House this morning that the duo will now be summoned to appear before the committee next Thursday, March 22.

"The committee deliberated (the matter) in depth and the majority (of the 12 members) were of the view that it would not (be considered subjudice)," he said.

Today's decision was an embarrassment for Dompok - a minister in the Prime Minister's Department - who had earlier claimed to have obtained "a majority decision" call off the meeting on grounds of subjudice among others.

While he was evasive about how the latest decision was reached, malaysiakini learnt that an 8-3 decision was recorded in favour of the hearing. This include at least six government backbenchers.

Dompok, who chaired the meeting, did not vote.

Ex-IGP to be summoned?

The committee had decided to summon the duo at its meeting on Feb 27. This came after Ramli - a former Sabah ACA chief who has since retired - made several explosive allegations against Zulkipli ranging from corruption to a sexual assault.

The allegations - which Zulkipli has denied - were contained in report written by Ramli, who sent a copy to then inspector-general of police Mohd Bakri Omar last year, among other parties.

The committee was to have heard both sides of the story this morning, but apparently decided last Thursday to cancel the meeting on grounds of 'latest developments'.

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

The committee then came under pressure from one of its members, Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang, and decided to review the decision at today's meeting.

Elaborating, Dompok said: "When I made the announcement (cancelling the hearing), I had consultations with MPs and felt there was agreement that, perhaps at this stage, it is not necessary to call the two gentlemen before the committee.

"(Subsequently,) there was an objection over the fact that we did not hold a meeting to decide on this issue. That's why I called for a meeting to look at the subject matter (and)

whether we do indeed need to call them.

"The members have since had time to ponder this issue. And today, they arrived at a decision that it would be in the interests of the committee to hear the two gentlemen."

To a question, Dompok said the committee has not decided whether to call Mohd Bakri, to look into why the police did not act on Ramli's report until the allegations were highlighted in the media recently.

"The meeting today only dealt with that issue (whether to call in the duo), we haven't decided to call any other party," he replied.

Ramli and Zulkipli are expected to be heard separately during the meeting, set to start at 11.30am and expected to take a day.

Previously a precedent was set in the matter of subjudice when the Public Accounts Committee was threatened with a contempt proceeding for probing into the merger between ECM Libra Bhd and Avenue Capital Resources Bhd.

The committee however continued with its sittings, saying that the issue of subjudice did not arise in such closed-door meetings.

Meanwhile, Parliament will begin its new session next Monday, to be opened by the new King, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin.

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