

For Parliament's attention

PM: Procurement of vaccines to be tabled next Monday

Current affairs: Anwar arriving for a press conference after chairing the weekly Cabinet meeting. Behind him are Deputy Prime Ministers Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof. — Bernama



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PUTRAJAYA: The procurement of Covid-19 vaccines and why it did not go through due process will be brought to the attention of Parliament in the coming session next Monday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said some parts of the procurement were signed off by the relevant minister without the approval or agreement of the Attorney-General.

This is among the findings stated in a White Paper to be tabled in Parliament. He, however, did not elaborate on the matter.

"Primarily because of the findings by the Health Ministry and the Minister of Law (Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said) on irregularities and transactions or approvals given not according to due process.

"There are also procurements that are questionable in terms of numbers and costing," he said after chairing the weekly Cabinet meeting yesterday.

Asked who the Health Minister

in question was, Anwar said: "It is not the question of a particular minister, but the ministers involved will need to answer or explain."

During the Covid-19 pandemic, two ministers were put in charge of pandemic-related matters as well as the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (PICK).

Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba was then the Health Minister, while Khairy Jamaluddin was then Science, Technology and Innovation Minister.

In July 2021, Khairy said that documents on vaccine agreement as well as detailed expenditures, including price of vaccine, had been presented to the Public Accounts Committee.

He was reported to have said the presentation was to ensure transparency in all purchases made for the PICK, which cost RM5.8bil.

In 2021, the then government gazetted amendments that allowed it to use funds from the National Trust Fund to procure vaccines and any related expenses.

This was gazetted as the Emergency (National Trust Fund

(Amendment) Ordinance 2021, dated April 14, 2021.

The fund is a form of savings collected from the country's natural resources.

Based on the National Trust Fund Act 1988, the fund is paid through consolidated funds and Petrolim Nasional Bhd.

Another issue to be raised in Parliament next Monday, said Anwar, would be on Batu Puteh, also known as Pedra Branca.

The government, he said, would leave it to the wisdom of Parliament to decide how the issue should be handled.

He added that a paper would be presented so that lawmakers could have the full information on the issue before coming to a decision.

"This issue has not seen an ending. The loss of a region for any country is a big and serious problem," he said.

Anwar said during his recent meeting with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, he had assured his counterpart that the issue would not affect good relations between Malaysia and the

island republic.

However, the act of violating the process of not appealing must be questioned, he added.

In December last year, the Attorney-General had been instructed to review matters pertaining to Batu Puteh claims so that the issue would not jeopardise bilateral relations between Malaysia and Singapore.

In 2008, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Pedra Branca belonged to Singapore, while the sovereignty over the nearby Middle Rocks (Batuan Tengah) was awarded to Malaysia.

The Malaysian government filed an application in 2017 for a review of the ICJ's decision to award legal jurisdiction over Batu Puteh to Singapore.

In 2018, the Pakatan Harapan government withdrew the application before the case was heard in June that year.