

**Special Committee To Monitor Acquisition Of Ministries' Assets Proposed
Bernama
January 19, 2012**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- A proposal has been made to set up a special committee to monitor the acquisition of assets by each ministry, including the Defence Ministry, in a bid to prevent confusions among the public.

The proposal was made during a meeting between Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and the representatives from the Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club (BNBBC) and the opposition here Thursday.

This proposal will be discussed in detail by both the government and the opposition before being tabled in Parliament, Ahmad Zahid told reporters after the two-hour meeting.

"...if the Parliament decided that the committee, which will be known as the Special Committee to Monitor Ministries' Asset Acquisition, should be set up, then we will adhere to it," he said.

BNBBC was represented by its deputy chairman Datuk Bung Moktar Radin, Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan, Khairy Jamaluddin, Datuk Ahmad Hamzah and P. Kamalanathan, while the opposition was represented by Tony Pua, Dr Zulkifly Ahmad and Datuk Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

The meeting was held to solve and explain the allegation made by the opposition that the cost for the acquisition of the Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) had increased to billions of ringgit as soon as the tender for the construction of six LSC was given to Boustead Naval Shipyard (BNS).

Commenting on the issue, Ahmad Zahid said the application for the acquisition of the LCS was made in 2008 where the ceiling price was RM9 billion, in which RM6 billion were allocated under the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP) and the other RM3 billion, under the 11MP.

"There was a confusion when people thought that the RM6 billion were the ceiling price for the LCS' acquisition despite the fact that, in 2008, the ceiling price was set at RM9 billion using the budget under the 10MP and 11MP," he said.

Hence, he said the explanation given during the meeting was hoped to have brought satisfactions to the opposition parties and that no more issues on national defence would be raised.

Nevertheless, Ahmad Zahid said the ministry was always prepared to convene discussions with any quarters who were in need of explanations on any issue concerning the ministry.

Meanwhile, Petaling Jaya Utara Member of Parliament (MP) Tony Pua of DAP said the party had no intention to question the acquisition of defence assets, but was only tried to ensure that the acquisition was appropriate and worth it.

Saifuddin, who is Machang MP and Parti Keadilan Rakyat secretary-general, on the other

hand, said it was the opposition's responsibility to scrutinise the acquisition of every asset made by the ministries.

"Under the 10MP, the allocation for security industry such as the Home Ministry and the Defence Ministry is RM23 billion. This has captured our attention to ask more explanations on the expenditure," he said.

Meanwhile, Bung Moktar, who is Kinabatangan MP, said as a citizen of this country, he was giving serious attention to the security-related issues.

He said security aspect was not something that should be compromised and treated lightly, but instead must be discussed seriously and wisely.

"This is one of the most awaited meeting and it is hoped that after this, the issues of national defence will not be the hot topic for political talks," he added.

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