

Pakatan reps claim 'political interference' in PAC probes
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, April 10 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers alleged today the possibility of "political interference" in the bipartisan Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) ongoing investigation of four scandals involving top government officials.

The five PR members of the committee told a press conference today that it has been two weeks since a meeting was convened and expressed concern that orders have been handed down by Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders to postpone all investigations until after the coming elections.

DAP MP Tony Pua pointed out that at the start of the current parliamentary session, the PAC had listed four items on its agenda - the National Feedlot Centre (NFC), Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli's out-of-court settlement with Danaharta, 1 Malaysia Development Bhd's Petrosaudi investment and the bloated cost of KLIA2.

But, Pua complained, the PAC had only met on the NFC while the remaining issues on its agenda have yet to be raised.

"It has been two weeks since our last meeting and the PAC has not called for another since then. We have asked the secretariat and the PAC chairman for a meeting, but it looks as if we will not meet again during this session.

"Perhaps this is because of political interference by those above to stop the PAC from conducting any investigation," he said.

He noted that the committee had agreed that investigation into the RM250 million NFC scandal should proceed although the matter has reached the courts, pointing out that the PAC's investigation would not touch on issues to be raised in the courtroom.

"What is in court now is the purchase of the One Menerung condominium unit (by National Feedlot Corporation or NFCorp) and another is the issue of criminal breach of trust involving RM40 million from the NFC's accounts.

"The PAC's investigation does not touch on both matters... we are looking at the administration of the ministry and other mismanagement not linked to that," he said.

Pua raised suspicion over a recent statement by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that the NFC case should no longer be discussed as it is now in court.

"Did the DPM send orders for all PAC investigations to be postponed until after the polls?"

"Is there a hand behind the scenes that is preventing the PAC (from investigating), to create a cover up, to prevent the prime minister from suffering in the polls?" he asked.

The NFCorp, a company run by former minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil's family that supervises the NFC, hit national headlines last year after the company made it into the

Auditor-General's Report last year for missing production targets.

Shahrizat's husband - NFCorp executive chairman Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail was recently charged in court for alleged criminal breach of trust involving the use of the RM250 million federal loan.

He has denied the charge and maintained that he is innocent.

The PR MPs today also revealed that an initial plan to visit the NFC cattle-farming scheme in Gemas, Negri Sembilan, was called off suddenly without reason.

"For us to know more, we decided to do a site visit to Gemas. But even that was cancelled without us knowing why," Tumpat MP Kamaruddin Jaafar said.

DAP's Tan Seng Giaw noted that so long as Parliament has not been dissolved, the PAC should proceed with its responsibilities and investigate all matters on its agenda.

PKR's William Leong agreed, noting that "closure" on the scandals should be sought as it involves public monies.

"Perhaps there are orders from BN for the PAC to no longer proceed with its work," he said.

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