

DAP chides Putrajaya for 'chickening out' over 1MDB-PetroSaudi scandal queries
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The refusal by the Second Finance Minister to answer crucial questions about the 1Malaysia Development Berhad-PetroSaudi scandal in Parliament yesterday has proved beyond doubt that Putrajaya is trying to cover it up and postpone the fallout, said DAP.

Its national publicity secretary Tony Pua said the minister, Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah's "chickening out" from answering questions showed that the government wanted to cover things up and was not serious about addressing issues like corruption.

Pua said Husni could have addressed the questions without touching on whether any criminal offence had been committed.

"Our (Pakatan Rakyat MPs') speeches in Parliament had sought the confirmation of facts such as to whether 1MDB transferred US\$700 million into the Swiss bank account of Good Star Limited and why the company did so.

"The Minister could definitely have answered these questions of fact without delving into the question of whether any crimes were committed," he said in a statement today.

Husni failed to answer queries about the 1MDB-PetroSaudi scandal, which was recently exposed by whistleblower site Sarawak Report, during the winding-up speech for the Ministry of Finance last night.

He first referred to the US\$700 million embezzlement by Good Star – an entity controlled by Malaysian businessman Low Taek Jho, who is better known as Jho Low – by claiming that the issue was already being probed by the auditor-general and the police.

Husni said it was best to wait for the outcome of the investigations.

Pua said for Husni to give such cursory responses in Parliament on a scandal so big that it had even attracted international scrutiny showed that the Barisan Nasional (BN) government was not serious about corruption, embezzlement and abuse of power.

"The refusal by the minister to answer these crucial questions proved beyond doubt that the government is attempting to cover up the scandal and postpone the fallout.

"Instead, the Cabinet has abdicated the matter to the special audit by the auditor-general, which may take months to complete.

"In that time, the (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Najib administration will hope that the scandal will quietly fade into the background or the crooks behind the multi-billion ringgit scandal will be able to deftly cover their tracks," he said.

Pua, who is Petaling Jaya Utara MP, took another dig at Husni, saying that he had used the standing orders to avoid answering questions.

He said when pressed by the Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin, Husni put up the pretence of holding and flipping the Parliamentary Standing Orders while seeking guidance from the Deputy Speaker as to whether he needs to answer the questions.

"The Deputy Speaker then granted permission to the minister to choose not to answer the questions.

"The Second Finance Minister deserves an Oscar (best actor award) because there is no clause in the Standing Order that prohibits a minister from responding to questions on cases which are being investigated either by the auditor-general or the police," the DAP lawmaker said.

1MDB has long been in the spotlight but scrutiny heightened after a series of reports by Sarawak Report, which said Low had orchestrated the 2009 joint venture between 1MDB and PetroSaudi International to allegedly siphon off US\$700 million from the strategic investor.

The UK-based website said that the 1MDB-PetroSaudi joint venture company's US\$700 million loan repayment to PetroSaudi in 2009 was a front and that the funds had been channelled to Good Star, a firm allegedly owned by Low.

The US\$700 million loan repayment was a provision under the joint venture contract between PetroSaudi and 1MDB, Sarawak Report said, citing documents it had obtained and subsequently published.

Since then, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had ordered the auditor-general to look at 1MDB's books, saying that the A-G report would be passed for transparency inspection to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which is fully bipartisan and reflects Parliament's composition.

Prior to Najib's order, PAC said it wanted the national auditor to carry out an audit of 1MDB's deals before it called up the company. – March 26, 2015.

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