

Opposition PAC members question directive to cancel 1MDB meetings
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Opposition members of the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) have questioned the directive to cancel its meetings with 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scheduled this month, arguing that only the bipartisan panel can decide on postponement and cancellations of its meetings.

They said the letter informing them of the cancellation was issued by the Parliament secretary, who also sits in PAC as its secretary.

"We want to know who directed the secretary to cancel the meetings that had been scheduled earlier. If the directive comes from the speaker, we want to know why, and what are the provisions in the Standing Order that allows this to take place," PAC member and DAP MP, Tony Pua said in Parliament today.

PAC was supposed to resume its highly anticipated inquiry into 1MDB today by grilling the debt-laden company's former and current top executives but this had been temporarily frozen pending the appointments of new chairman and members.

Last Tuesday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak reshuffled the Cabinet, which saw the PAC chairman and three of its members appointed as ministers and deputy ministers.

Parliamentary rules state that a member of the administration cannot be in PAC.

Pua, who is DAP's Petaling Jaya Utara MP, said PAC should be accorded proper respect by the Speaker by discussing with the panel or its deputy chairman, Dr Tan Seng Giaw.

"This is contempt of PAC, it is treating PAC like nothing. This has proven that instead of being a world-class parliament, it has become a rubber stamp.

"Instead, Pandikar only confirmed that Malaysia's Parliament is a rubber stamp," he said, referring to Speaker, Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia.

Another PAC member, PAS's Tumpat MP Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar, said any cancellation or postponement of the bipartisan panel's meetings must get the agreement of PAC members.

"There is no PAC meeting to discuss about cancellation or postponements of our scheduled meetings.

"We object to decisions by any quarter to cancel the PAC proceedings, this is an offence that goes against Parliament's Standing Orders," he said.

PKR's Selayang MP, William Leong, said the postponement of PAC proceedings raised the issue of the separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches.

"By right, PAC must be allowed to carry out its work especially on 1MDB because it is of public interest.

"But now without any PAC consent, the investigation is delayed. The exercise of PAC's powers is now being interfered with and this is an activity that is detrimental to parliamentary democracy," said Leong, who is also part of PAC. – August 4, 2015.

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