

## **1MDB DEBATE NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN**

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**By Admin-s**

**(The Star) – A live telecast of the debate would disrupt the PAC proceedings and create prejudice among the public towards those involved in the 1MDB probe.**

After all the brouhaha over the debate on 1Malaysia Development Bhd between one of its most vocal critics Tony Pua and its CEO Arul Kanda Kandasamy, the event might not take place at all.

The anticipation of the showdown between the two, which has been hogging the limelight the past few days, fizzled out after Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia poured cold water on the proposed debate.

“If they wish to continue with the debate, I will not involve myself in the matter and will step down as Speaker,” Pandikar told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said the live debate between the Petaling Jaya Utara MP and Arul was a breach of Parliamentary Standing Orders and could only proceed if the two were to excuse themselves from the ongoing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) investigations into 1MDB.

Pua is a member of the PAC while Arul is slated to appear before the committee to answer queries over the strategic fund’s business ethics.

In an immediate reaction, Pua said he would rather forgo the debate than not have Arul appear before the PAC.

He had earlier prepared 10 questions that he had planned to ask Arul.

The stage was set for the debate after Arul agreed to the debate on Sunday, withdrawing his initial condition that Pua should first resign from PAC.

Pua had challenged Arul for the debate, after accusing him of giving “recycled” answers during a live interview over *Bernama TV* last week.

Earlier, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak has said that the live debate would be aired live over RTM on Friday, saying that it needed to be expedited as the issue was the talk of the people.

Pandikar, in responding to a question from DAP Seremban MP Anthony Loke on whether he had discussed with the Government before reaching his decision, said he was merely fulfilling his role as Speaker, which was to ensure that Parliamentary rules were followed.

“If the Government has a different agenda, then it is its own agenda,” he said in the House.

Parliamentary Standing Order 85 specifically prohibits the publication and dissemination of statements which are uttered before a select committee, he added.

He said the questions and answers from both sides during the debate would also contravene Parliamentary Standing Order 23(1)(e), which specifies that an inquiry cannot touch on committee proceedings, which have not yet been presented to Parliament.

“Considering that the issues which Pua and Arul wish to debate are still the subject of PAC’s investigations, any statements or remarks they make during the debate can be considered premature,” he said, adding that a live telecast of the debate would disrupt the PAC proceedings and create prejudice among the public towards those involved in the 1MDB probe.

Legal expert Datuk Jahaberdeen Mohammed Yunos said Pandikar’s decision was appropriate in order to safeguard PAC’s integrity.

Jahaberdeen said that Pua, as a PAC member, should have known the terms of reference and should have been able to anticipate the Speaker’s decision.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal however disagreed, saying that no conditions should be imposed on both Pua and Arul to proceed with the debate.

“What is important is that the public at large should also be able to hear the truth so I think it is not wise for us to impose the conditions,” said the former Rural and Regional Development Minister.

Shafie, who is also the Semporna MP, said it is vital that the public know what was happening in 1MDB.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the debate would not solve the 1MDB problems.

The Umno Youth chief said he was more interested in the outcome of the PAC investigations than the live debate.

“Perhaps the debate will enlighten the public, but it cannot resolve the outstanding problems. The more important solution is through the PAC proceedings,” he said.

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