

## **1MDB, Najib's credibility to cast shadow over Parliament agenda**

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**By Eileen Ng**

Amid expectations of a no-confidence motion against Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the Dewan Rakyat next week, there are other highly anticipated items on the agenda, some linked to scandal-ridden 1Malaysia Development Bhd's impact.

One glaring change will be the seating arrangements.

Former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was seated next to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak in the front row, will now be placed with other Barisan Nasional (BN) backbenchers.

The same fate also awaits former minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, previously seated with other ministers.

Both Muhyiddin and Shafie were axed in the Cabinet reshuffle last July for their open criticism of 1MDB.

At the same time, six Parti Amanah Nasional (Amanah) federal lawmakers have requested for new seating arrangements, following their departure from PAS.

"We have written to Parliament about this and I understand our request is being considered, pending the Speaker's agreement," Amanah parliamentary whip Khalid Samad told The Malaysian Insider.

New arrangements for press personnel reporting on parliamentary proceedings which would have meant their isolation in a separate building away from where legislative sittings, have been shelved, and they will continue to operate as usual from the Parliament lobby.

### **New committee members**

New appointments are also expected on Monday for both the parliamentary select committee and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which lost key members as a result of the Cabinet reshuffle.

The select committee will have to replace Muhyiddin and Datuk Seri G. Palanivel, as both are no longer ministers, while another member, former opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, is currently in jail.

PAC lost its chairman and three BN members when they were promoted to the Cabinet, resulting in a temporary freeze to the bipartisan panel's probe into 1MDB.

### **No-confidence motion**

The highlight of the seven-week sitting, the last for this year ending on December 3, will undoubtedly be the no-confidence motion against Najib, who is facing allegations linked to the 1MDB scandal, including the RM2.6 billion "donation" from an unknown Middle Eastern donor into his personal accounts.

It is anybody's guess when opposition lawmakers will table the motion, although opposition leader Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail has said it could be as early as next week.

Her allies, however, have expressed doubts on this since they lacked the numbers.

Another option is to ensure that the 2016 Budget, which Najib is scheduled to table on October 23, is defeated when it is put to a vote.

A two-thirds majority is needed to push through the no-confidence motion. The opposition only has 88 seats out of 222 in the lower house.

It is also not known if PAS would support the motion.

### **2016 Budget and the economy**

Another highlight will be the tabling of the 2016 Budget on October 23 by Najib, who doubles as the finance minister.

All eyes will be on Putrajaya as it unveils its plan to tackle economic headwinds, which saw the ringgit becoming Asia's worst performing currency this year, sliding beyond the RM4 mark against the US dollar.

This has been attributed to the worsening global outlook, China's surprise devaluation of the yuan, plunging commodity prices and the current political scandals linked to Najib.

Najib said the budget would focus on strengthening growth, enhancing inclusiveness and ensuring fiscal sustainability, as well as provisions for low-income households.

MPs from both sides of the divide are also expected to raise current issues when debating on the budget bill.

This includes worries over the country's economic performance, the ongoing scandals surrounding 1MDB, Malaysia's participation in the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement, the recent toll hikes, as well as the charging of two government critics with economic sabotage.

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang has already prepared four questions for Najib, including to come clean on the donor behind the RM2.6 billion deposits, and to explain why he skipped the opening of an anti-graft conference last month.

"If there is no motion of seeking confidence or no confidence in the first week of

Parliament, will the voting on the 2016 Budget become a test case whether Najib still commands the confidence of the majority of Members of Parliament?" said Lim.

### **Private members' bills**

A few opposition lawmakers will also submit private member's bills and motions for the Parliament to debate on urgent matters.

PKR's Pandan MP, Rafizi Ramli, has submitted a private member's bill he called Act of Separation of Position (Prime Minister and Finance Minister) 2015, urging that a law be enacted to prohibit a person holding the posts of prime minister and finance minister at the same time.

DAP's Puchong MP, Gobind Singh Deo has also submitted a private member's bill to amend Article 145 (6) of the Federal Constitution to make it compulsory for a tribunal to decide whether an attorney-general (A-G) should be removed from office.

This comes after former A-G Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail was removed on July 27, in the midst of a special task force investigation into 1MDB, even though his term was to have ended in early October.

Putrajaya will also table a new legislation called the Malaysian Transport Safety Board Bill and also amendments to two current cyber laws: the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 and Communications and Multimedia Commission Act 1998, to check abuse of the Internet. – October 16, 2015.

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