

In another twist, Putrajaya's 1MDB final audit report delayed indefinitely
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By Jahabar Sadiq

Citing members' commitments, the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has postponed the auditor-general's (A-G) final report on debt-laden 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) until further notice.

The A-G was due to table the National Audit Department's final audit report on the state-owned strategic investor's finances tomorrow and Thursday at a PAC meeting, but members have been told otherwise in a late night message.

"Greetings Dato'/Datuk/YB, it is informed that considering many PAC members are abroad, some fulfilling their umrah (minor pilgrimage) and other important commitments, the tabling of the Auditor-General's Final Report on 1MDB scheduled for February 24 and 25 has been postponed to a date that will be informed later, thank you – Johan Afandi, PAC secretary," said a message received by PAC members last night.

It is not known who among the PAC members are abroad or performing their umrah as Parliament is only due to convene next March 7.

PAC has 14 members led by its chairman, Datuk Hasan Arifin, the Rompin MP from Barisan Nasional (BN) who replaced Pulau MP Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, who was made a deputy minister last July.

Four BN MPs replaced Jazlan as well as three others who joined the Najib government in a shock Cabinet reshuffle that saw Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal lose their jobs. A PAS MP also replaced another who quit to join PKR.

On February 11, PAC chairman Datuk Hasan Arifin had said focus would now be on the A-G's final report on 1MDB to be tabled before the bi-partisan committee on February 24 and 25.

"The committee will consider calling more witnesses to assist in the PAC report on 1MDB's management after the A-G's report is tabled, if it is appropriate and necessary to do so," he said.

He urged the public not to doubt the transparency of the committee's report that will be tabled in Parliament.

"Our priority is to listen to the A-G's final report on 1MDB and to complete our report," Hasan said.

Hasan had expressed concern in January that PAC would not be able to table its report in Parliament in the coming parliamentary session.

Among those who had testified before PAC were former 1MDB chairman Tan Sri Lodin Wok Kamaruddin, former 1MDB president Datuk Shahrol Halmi and current president and CEO, Arul Kanda Kandasamy.

The committee also said the public should not doubt PAC's report, as it was made up of members from all parties including the opposition.

PAC member Tony Pua said recently that Bank Negara Malaysia governor Tan Sri Zeti Akhtar Aziz and former 1MDB chief executive officer Mohd Hazem Abdul Rahman should also testify to the committee.

But Hasan said Hazem's testimony was not needed as issues during his tenure had already been answered by Lodin at earlier proceedings.

The PAC probe into 1MDB has been going on since May 2015 when it ordered the A-G to look into the strategic investor's accounts since it was formed in 2009.

1MDB, which took strategic stakes in the property and power industries, sold its energy unit Edra Global Energy Bhd to China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGN) last November for RM9.83 billion in cash.

On the last day of 2015, it agreed to sell 60% of its equity in Bandar Malaysia Sdn Bhd for RM7.41 billion, as part of its rationalisation plan to reduce its RM45 billion debt.

The stake was sold to a consortium comprising Iskandar Waterfront Holdings Sdn Bhd (IWH) and China Railway Engineering Corporation (M) Sdn Bhd, said 1MDB.

However, investigations into its debts have continued despite the sale, with several other authorities in Switzerland, Hong Kong and Singapore saying they were looking into issues related to money transfers. – February 23, 2016.

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