

MACC oversight panel meets for last time today, insists Najib should face charges
Malaysian Insider
Feb 24, 2016

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) Operations Review Panel will meet for the last time today, still adamant that the prime minister must face charges over his alleged financial scandals, sources say.

Speculation is rife that the panel is likely to be disbanded as the one-year term of the eight-man group, chaired by former Sarawak state secretary Tan Sri Dr Hamid Bugo ends today, as members have not received extension letters.

The others in the panel are Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Datuk Zamani Abdul Ghani, Datuk Azizah Arshad, Datuk Wan Abdul Wahab Abdullah, Professor Dr Normah Omar, Dr Sundramoorthy M. Pathmanathan and Lim Chee Wee.

This committee has been pushing for the investigations into the prime minister over his alleged financial scandals to be reopened, after it was ordered close by Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi Ali last month.

The review panel is one of the five oversight committees set up following the rebranding of MACC in 2009.

The terms of reference of the review panel, among others, are to present its views on cases where no charges were preferred against the accused by the public prosecutor.

Sources told The Malaysian Insider this panel has also been critical when Apandi declined to frame charges against Datuk Seri Najib Razak over the Finance Ministry-owned SRC International Sdn Bhd because of "insufficient evidence".

They had also expressed concern when Apandi, who is also public prosecutor, refused to assist MACC investigators to obtain documents and statements from abroad as part of their probe, under the mutual legal assistance (MLA) initiative, over the RM2.6 billion funnelled into Najib's bank accounts.

Apandi, who was appointed last July, ordered MACC to close the files into three investigation papers but former A-G Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman said Apandi has no such authority.

"Insyallah (God willing), we are on the same page that Najib ought to be charged with alleged offences," a panel member said on condition of anonymity.

The member said MACC officers have briefed them and was certain painstaking investigation was conducted despite numerous challenges and obstacles.

Further, sources said, a five-man special panel, comprising members from three oversight committees, was also formed to advise investigators on both cases – SRC

and the RM2.6 billion political donation.

The review panel is merely an administrative body and the appointment of members is made by the prime minister. They are experts who represent relevant professions and who should represent the quality of integrity and independence of MACC.

Other legally constituted panels are the Anti-Corruption Advisory Board, Special Committee on Corruption and the Complaints Committee.

On January 26, Apandi said there was "insufficient evidence" to charge Najib with criminal wrongdoing over the RM2.6 billion donation and SRC International.

Two days later, the Operations Review Panel and Special Panel issued a statement that although they took note of Apandi's decisions, they still advised MACC to engage with the A-G.

A meeting was supposed to be between the A-G and three oversight committees last week over both cases but it was called off by the Attorney-General's Chambers at the 11th hour with no reasons given.

Former de facto law minister Datuk Zaid Ibrahim and ex-Umno leader Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan have filed judicial reviews to challenge Apandi's refusal to initiate prosecution against Najib. – February 24, 2016.

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