

PAC members 'disappear' despite 2-week notice for 1MDB audit briefing, says source

Malaysian Insider

Feb 25, 2016

By V. Anbalagan

A member of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has taken his colleagues to task for going overseas despite being informed two weeks earlier that the auditor-general (A-G) would brief them on the final report on debt-laden 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the parliamentarian, part of the 14-member bipartisan committee, asked if it was a deliberate attempt to disrupt the tabling of the final audit report.

The A-G had submitted a preliminary report to PAC on July 10 last year.

The PAC member said that committee chairman Datuk Hasan Arifin was among those who had gone abroad.

The Malaysian Insider contacted Hasan through text messages and phone calls to verify his whereabouts, but his mobile phone appeared to have been switched off.

The 14 PAC members are Hasan (Rompin), deputy chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw (Kepong), Datuk Ahmad Hamzah (Jasin), Datuk Liang Teck Meng (Simpang Rengam), Datuk Abd Aziz Sheikh Fadzir (Kulim Bandar Baru), Datuk Wee Jeck Seng (Tanjong Piai), Datuk Koh Nai Kwong (Alor Gajah), Hasbi Habibollah (Limbang), Datuk Nawawi Ahmad (Langkawi), Datuk Dr Marcus Mojigoh (Putatan), Tony Pua (Petaling Jaya Utara), William Leong Jee Keng (Selayang), Datuk Kamarul Baharin Abas (Telok Kemang) and Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan (Kota Baru).

The PAC member said he was shocked to learn of his colleagues' absence, including that of Hasan, when the February 24 and 25 meetings were agreed to during the committee's last session on February 11.

"The scheduled meetings (on February 24 and 25) could not proceed without the chairman although there were enough quorums," he told The Malaysian Insider.

At least seven members, including the chairman, must be present to conduct a meeting.

"Many now see the postponed meetings as an attempt to keep the 1MDB issue away from the knowledge of the members of Parliament and the public for as long as possible," the PAC member added.

He said it was decided on February 11 that PAC would be briefed by the A-G after receiving the 1MDB report on February 24, adding that members also agreed to study the report before deciding if more witnesses should be called.

"Most importantly, to make a decision whether to call Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to appear before us to answer any queries."

Najib, who is finance minister, is also chairman of 1MDB's board of advisors.

Hours after The Malaysian Insider reported on the postponement, Hasan said the final audit report would be tabled in the first week of March.

He said most PAC members were either overseas to perform the umrah (minor pilgrimage) or attending to important commitments.

"It is important for all PAC members to be present to hear the tabling of the report," he said.

The Malaysian Insider also reported that PAC members were informed of the postponement in a late night message on Monday.

Hasan urged the public not to doubt the transparency of the committee's report that would 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.

The PAC source, however, told The Malaysian Insider that it was unlikely the parliamentary committee's findings and the A-G's report could be tabled in the coming Dewan Rakyat session which begins on March 7.

Yesterday, Gelang Patah MP Lim Kit Siang said Hasan must name members who were not in the country and state the reasons for their absence.

Lim added that the absent PAC members should be referred to the Committee of Rights and Privileges for disciplinary action unless they had a good reason for going overseas after the finalisation of the two PAC meetings (February 25 and 25).

PAC, under former chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, began proceedings into 1MDB last year after allegations of RM2.6 billion in Najib's accounts first surfaced in a report by The Wall Street Journal (WSJ).

WSJ said the source of the funds was unknown, but reported that the money had gone through 1MDB-linked entities in various tranches, the largest of which, US\$681 million, was channelled to Najib's accounts in March 2013, ahead of the general election in May that year.

Nur Jazlan had then said PAC could not wait for the A-G's report on the troubled company as there was too much speculation by the public over the investment firm's financial standing.

The strategic fund had come under public scrutiny mainly because of its more than RM42 billion debts racked up since its operations six years ago.

However, Nur Jazlan and three other PAC members stepped down from the committee following their appointment as Cabinet members in July last year.

Proceedings were suspended until Hasan, who was MP for only five months, took over as PAC chairman in October. – February 25, 2016.

Copyright © 2015 Edge Insider Sdn Bhd

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pac-members-disappear-despite-2-week-notice-for-1mdb-audit-briefing-says-so>