

Illogical to classify 1MDB report as secret, says PAC member
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A Public Accounts Committee (PAC) member has dismissed a suggestion that the audit report on 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) was classified under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) 1972, saying it would be illogical.

Selayang MP William Leong said as far as he knew, there was no such thing unless "I am in for a surprise tomorrow".

The 14-member PAC will meet tomorrow to be briefed by the auditor-general (A-G) on the final report on debt-laden 1MDB.

Leong, a lawyer, was commenting on a report in a news portal that the report had been classified as secret with the National Security Council.

Leong said his understanding of the law was that only Cabinet and state executive council papers could be classified under the OSA.

"You cannot classify the A-G's report as secret. Anyone who has attempted to do so appears not to understand the law," he told The Malaysian Insider.

On July 10 last year, the A-G submitted an interim report on 1MDB and Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah said the report found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Following a briefing on the report by the A-G, PAC is to decide if more witnesses should be called.

Leong said it was most important to make a decision whether to call Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to appear before PAC to answer any queries.

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

PAC, under former chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, began proceedings into 1MDB early last year after allegations of RM2.6 billion deposited into 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 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 came under public scrutiny mainly due to its debts of over RM42 billion, racked up since it began 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 Datuk Hasan Arifin, who was MP for only five months, took over as PAC chairman in October.

The US-based WSJ on Tuesday quoted anonymous global investigators saying more than US\$1 billion from 1MDB had been found in Najib's personal accounts, not RM2.6 billion as previously reported.

Both 1MDB and government officials have denied the allegation and accuse WSJ of having a hidden agenda to oust Najib and smear the good name of Malaysia. – March 3, 2016.

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