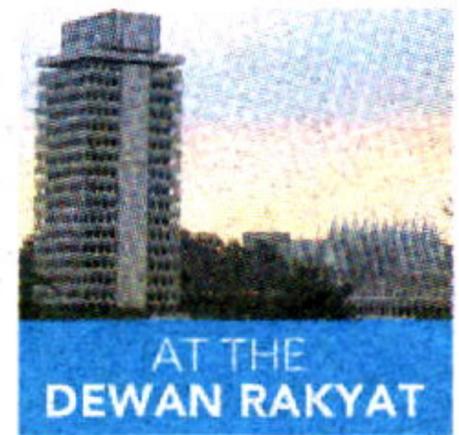


'I have **no power** to stop debate'



> Pandikar says he had only asked it be held after PAC probe

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KUALA LUMPUR: Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia (pix) yesterday said he has no power to stop the debate that is scheduled this Friday between iMalaysia Development Berhad (iMDB) chief executive officer Arul Kanda Kandasamy and DAP MP Tony Pua, but preferred it to be held after Public Accounts Committee (PAC) releases its report on iMDB.

"I had never said the debate should be called off ... I only wanted the debate to be after the PAC report on iMDB has been brought to the hall," Pandikar said when answering queries from Lim Guan Eng (DAP-Bagan) on why the debate should be called off.

When asked by Pua on if he was barred from making public statements on iMDB while PAC was still investigating the firm, Pandikar said he could not distinguish public statements made by Pua on iMDB from the DAP lawmaker's role in the PAC.

"You can make statements if they don't use PAC information.

"But my problem is I can't distinguish between what you say outside and your role in PAC ... It's like trying to separate sugar and sweet."

However, Pandikar did not explicitly state whether there was a gag order on Pua.

Pandikar had previously ruled that Pua must resign from PAC or restrain his involvement in the parliamentary panel's ongoing inquiry into iMDB if he wished to debate Arul Kanda.

He also said that Arul Kanda, who has been called as a witness, should not testify in the PAC proceeding if he took part.

Pandikar, however, stood firm in his stand to quit his post as the Dewan Rakyat speaker if the government pressed ahead in hosting the debate.

Meanwhile, the Pakatan Harapan coalition says it wants the debate to continue although RTM had decided against hosting it.

Pakatan Harapan secretary-general

Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said yesterday the coalition will announce the replacement for Pua (DAP- Petaling Jaya Utara) today.

When asked by reporters on the move by Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak to cancel the

proposed live telecast of the debate, he said they are willing to find other alternatives to ensure the debate goes on.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak in a written reply said all financial transactions made by SRC International Sdn Bhd did not need his written approval.

Najib, who is also the finance minister, said the agreement is stated in the company's memorandum and articles of association (M&A).

Pua also asked if iMDB had paid RM40 million in December 2012 and RM10 million in February 2013 to Ihsan Perdana through its subsidiary, Gandingan Mentari, to which he said he cannot comment as the matter was still being investigated.

