

MALAYSIA

Auditor General makes plain what Zahid and Shabery got wrong

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The Auditor General has denied the Home Minister's claim that the police had explained to the Audit Department what happened to 44 missing guns and other gear. AG Tan Sri Ambrin Buang (pic) has said there was no such thing.

He also disputed former youth and sports minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek's claim that the money for bringing in three K-pop groups to Malaysia for World Youth Day came from sponsors.

On the missing guns and police gear worth RM1.3 million, Ambrin said there was no reply from the police on the issue of the missing items, which included 44 firearms, 29 vehicles, 26 walkie-talkies, 22 radios and other equipment.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had earlier said the ministry had submitted a report to the AG with an explanation on the missing items but this explanation was not included in the 2012 Auditor General's Report.

"An explanation has already been given but it was not done on time to be included in the report. I want to ensure that there has been no misappropriation. That is the important thing in this matter," Ahmad Zahid had said.

For his part, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar had said that the missing guns may not have fallen into the hands of criminals but could have fallen into the sea from boats and the weapons could not be recovered.

He said each firearm carried an identification code and so far police had not come across any report of the missing weapons being used in any crime.

The AG responded to this, saying that what Khalid had said was only his own take on the matter.

"There was no mention about guns going missing in the sea in our report and there was no reply from the police on this issue either," he told The Malaysian Insider yesterday.

But he did not dismiss this explanation. "We can't discount the possibility when the police conduct operations or trainings at sea, the pistols may have fallen into the sea."

"Cases of missing police assets are due to negligence by police personnel such as misplacing it or allowing it to be stolen, besides its weakness in managing assets."

Opposition lawmakers had ridiculed the police after the AG's report came out and they suggested that the missing guns were somehow connected to the recent spike in violent crimes involving firearms.

DAP's Teresa Kok lambasted police for making excuses to deflect attention from their inefficiencies.

"How would Khalid know that the guns fell into the ocean? Would any Malaysian, in his right mind, accept such a lame and unjustified explanation?" she asked.

On how the Audit Department discovered the missing items, Ambrin explained that according to regulations, a ministry, department or agency which loses any government asset has to report the loss to the Ministry of Finance and to the Audit Department.

Another revelation in the AG's report which turned into a controversy was the RM1.6 million which was paid by the Youth and Sports Ministry to bring three K-pop groups to Malaysia for the World Youth Day celebrations.

Former minister Ahmad Shabery insisted that the money came from sponsors but his successor Khairy Jamaluddin, who took the helm in May, admitted that the ministry had paid for the concert.

Shabery claimed the ministry had received RM20 million from domestic and foreign corporate sponsors for the event.

Calling the AG's department "culas" (lazy), he said it had failed to take into account that the money was banked into the National Youth Council's account by the sponsors.

However, Ambrin disputed this too, pointing out that neither the ministry's officials nor the council had challenged the fact that the money came from government allocations channelled through the council during discussions with both parties in the course of the audit.

"In our auditing of the disbursement of grants by the ministry to non-governmental organisations, we discovered that a sum of money was paid for several activities connected to the celebrations which was considered to be imprudent, including one which involved the K-Pop concert.

"That is why the issue was raised in the Audit Report," he added. – October 8, 2013.