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NewStraitsTimes • SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2022

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OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS PROJECT DELAY

PAC: SPEED UP OPV PROBE

Wrap up investigation before Parliament is dissolved, urges PAC member

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THE Public Accounts Committee (PAC) wants the investigation into the procurement of three offshore patrol vessels (OPV) to be expedited before Parliament is dissolved.

PAC member Ahmad Hassan said this following the government's stand in guaranteeing freedom to the PAC to conduct investigation into the two-year delay of the vessels' delivery.

Ahmad, who is also a PAP member of parliament, said this must be done before Parliament was dissolved as the PAC members would change after a new government is formed.

"There have been talks among the PAC members who have urged for the investigation to be made quickly.



Ahmad Hassan



One of three offshore patrol vessels (OPV) being built for the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency in Pulau Indah, Selangor, that is supposed to be ready this year. PIC COURTESY OF MMEA

"We must take into account the date that the Parliament is dissolved to avoid the whole process from being disrupted.

"The membership of PAC may change after the 15th General

Election, causing them to reinvestigate, resulting in losses in terms of cost and manpower.

"Unless the government gives an assurance that Parliament would be dissolved only after the investigation is completed, then

we are ready to speed up the whole process," he said yesterday.

Ahmad was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's guarantee that the government would allow the PAC to freely investigate the OPV procurement worth RM740 million.

The OPV should have been handed over to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in 2020.

In February, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin confirmed that the delivery of

MMEA's three OPV had been delayed, although he did not reveal the new delivery dates.

Hamzah said the first OPV, named *Tun Fatimah*, was expected to be delivered this year with the second one next year and the third in 2024.

On Monday, MMEA director-general Maritime Admiral Datuk Mohd Zubil Mat Som said the OPV were being built by local company THHE Destini Sdn Bhd in Pulau Indah, Selangor, and had attributed the delay to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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PROGRESS MADE

'UPDATE ON LCS PROJECT NEXT WEEK'

Construction of first ship by year-end if all conditions fulfilled, says Hisham

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THE Defence Ministry will provide an update on the delayed Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) construction project next week.

Senior Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said mobilisation efforts had taken place in the past few months and progress had been made.

"We have revitalised relationships with the original equipment manufacturer in Europe and also the vendors.

"We have also spoken to the banks on the cabinet's decision to continue with the project.

"By year-end, if we have fulfilled all the necessary requirements, then we can move on to the construction of our first ship.



A Littoral Combat Ship under construction at the Boustead Naval Shipyard in Lumut, Perak, last month. FILE PIC

"Much progress has been made during the mobilisation period.

"In a few days, we will issue a statement on it," he said at a press conference at the Tuanku Mizan Armed Forces Hospital in Wangsa Maju here yesterday.

The Public Accounts Commit-

tee's findings had revealed discrepancies and delays in the RM9 billion LCS construction project since 2017.

The contract was awarded to Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd via direct negotiation, with the government paying RM6.083

billion, but not a single LCS has been delivered so far.

According to a declassified report by the governance, procurement, and finance investigation committee, the cost of completing the six LCS may balloon to RM11.145 billion.

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ALLOCATIONS FOR REPAIR WORKS

RM38m boost to upgrade armed forces hospitals

KUALA LUMPUR: Healthcare facilities nationwide belonging to the Armed Forces are set for a huge boost with allocations for upgrade, maintenance and repair works.

Senior Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said that all five armed forces hospitals — Tuanku Mizan Armed Forces Hospital; 94 Armed Forces Hospital Terendak Camp; 96 Armed Forces Hospital, Naval Base Lumut; Armed Forces Hospital, Kota Kinabalu Naval Base and Army Hospital, Syed Sirajuddin Camp — will undergo maintenance and upgrading works worth RM37.93 million.

This includes RM4.67 million to improve medical equipment, RM2.6 million for building maintenance and RM30.66 million for medical supplies.

Besides that, all 19 military clinics, 48 military medical centres and 40 military dental centres will undergo maintenance and improvement works with RM13.3 million allocated for maintenance purposes and RM61 million for medicine and medical equipment, Hishammuddin said.

"The Armed Forces will also purchase two additional field hospital units at a total cost of RM47 million.



Senior Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein speaking to a patient at the Tuanku Mizan Armed Forces Hospital in Wangsa Maju in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him is Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin (fourth from left). PIC BY HAIRUL ANUAR RAHIM

"This purchase is important as part of preparations to mobilise more field hospitals if needed by the Health Ministry in the future, including during the monsoon season which is expected to occur at the

end of this year.

"The Armed Forces has also purchased 50 field ambulances at a cost of RM27 million," he said in a press conference after visiting the Tuanku Mizan Armed Forces Hos-

pital in Wangsa Maju here yesterday.

Present were Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, Army chief General Tan Sri Zamrose Mohd Zaid and Defence Ministry sec-

retary-general Datuk Seri Muez Abdul Aziz.

Hishammuddin has also ordered the ministry's secretary-general to expedite the tender process for the new Terendak Camp Armed Forces Hospital with an allocation of RM325 million.

He also announced that the United States Indo-Pacific Command had confirmed a cooperation pact with the Armed Forces in the health field for a period of five years, which aims to develop the capacity of its health services in various aspects.

For a start, the US has contributed medical equipment to the Royal Medical Corps (RMC) with a cost of US\$3 million and has agreed to work together to develop a Military Medicine Centre of Excellence.

"I also express my appreciation to the United Arab Emirates, Australia and Saudi Arabia for their full support and involvement in jointly making the development of this Military Medicine Centre of Excellence a success," he said.

The visit by Hishammuddin and Khairy to Tuanku Mizan Armed Forces Hospital was to ensure welfare aspects continued to be defended comprehensively.

They met with specialists to get the latest developments in their duties as well as feedback on what could be improved in the hospital.