Hidden hands behind attacks on Najib?
MalaysiaKini.com
Mar 6, 2015
By Nigel Aw

Pressure has been mounting on Najib Abdul Razak in recent weeks, with him being hit by one controversy after another, with the likes of 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and fugitive Sirul Azhar Umar making the headlines.

This has prompted Umno leaders to call for a gathering this Sunday, to pledge their support for the embattled prime minister.

Malaysiakini has asked several people on whether all that is being unravelled is a coincidence or the work of hidden hands.

Political scientist Wong Chin Huat is certain that there is more than meets the eye.

"I don't think that it is spontaneous, it (the attack) appears well-planned and coordinated. That is why Najib is feeling threatened.

"Many things seem to be hitting the prime minister at the same time," Wong said.

In Australia, Sirul is threatening to bare all on the grisly murder of Altantuya Shaariibuu.

In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini, the former police commando lamented that while he had been sentenced to death, those with the motive to kill her are still free.

Weighing in, PKR vice-president Rafizi Ramli suspects that Sirul's escape to Australia before the Altantuya murder verdict was delivered was masterminded by certain quarters.

"Everyone knows Sirul is only an SPM school leaver and will not have knowledge of where to escape to.

"His choice of Australia was very apt in that he cannot be extradited. Surely, there are people behind him," Rafizi said, referring to the Australian law that forbids those facing the death penalty from being deported to their home countries.

This, Rafizi said, is on top of having the resources to hire a prominent lawyer and arranging travel plans, despite Sirul being jobless since being charged with the murder in 2006.

"I stop short of saying there is a conspiracy, but some questions need to be cleared. For example, why was Sirul's passport not held back and how could he easily pass through key entry points in the country and flee?" he added.

Is the doc behind the scene?

Rafizi also speculate that Najib's opponents, chiefly former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, may be manouvering to oust the prime minister.

Najib, who was defence minister and deputy prime minister when Altantuya was murdered by two of his bodyguards, had repeatedly denied any involvement in the matter and the police also cleared him of any wrongdoing.

Despite this, the Altantuya case continues to haunt him.

Meanwhile, the 1MDB controversy has also boiled over, with the company's internal documents leaked on several fronts.

This includes its email correspondence with PetroSaudi being published by Sarawak Report and a whistleblower tipping off Rafizi about alleged irregularities in a hefty loan obtained from AmBank.

If the leaks are more than a coincidence, then the usual suspect is again Mahathir, who has fiercely criticised 1MDB and Najib's management of the state investment fund.

Recently, Mahathir had openly said that if he was the prime minister hit by such scandals, he would have resigned.

This speculation was given additional impetus when a month before the leak of 1MDB's email correspondence, Sarawak Report editor Clare Rewcastle Brown interviewed Mahathir.

However, Rewcastle told Malaysiakini that while the impression of Mahathir being behind the leak is understandable, the former premier was not responsible for the material published by Sarawak Report.

"He did not provide me with any of the materials I have been using, although I am not able to disclose those various sources," she said.

But she noted that following her interview with Mahathir, she concluded that the Umno veteran "remains very in touch" and still has "many ears on the ground".

"I got the impression that he had an inkling of the nature of the problems before I was able to provide more concrete information in my eventual exposes," Rewcastle said.

She disagrees that the chain of controversies are a case of political orchestration.

"It is more of a question of chickens coming home to roost - BN and all its doings were focused in past years around getting through the 13th general election and winning it.

"They made it, but now they are facing all the consequences of the delayed build-up," she said.

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Source : http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/291131