

## **'Extreme nudity' in Najib's administration**

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COMMENT Has anyone of you read Singapore's 2013 Auditor-General's Report? Here's an extract.

Based on the audits for this year and the last six years, AGO observed that procurement has continued to be an area prone to lapses... AGO observed instances of non-compliance... These included - waiving competition on weak grounds, allowing bid alterations by certain bidders after tender had closed, not disclosing evaluation criteria upfront in tender documents, not evaluating tenders properly and obtaining approvals retrospectively.

Yes, I'm not kidding. That was from Singapore's 2013 Auditor-General's Report. Google it! But I'm not here to talk about their report. Today I think we should focus on the 'extreme nudity' in Najib Abdul Razak's administration.

After Najib's first election victory as prime minister and chairperson of Barisan Nasional in the 13th general election, he made an announcement which stunned many critics and supporters.

His first 'bold' move was when he invited a 'predator' into the cabinet by announcing that the then-Transparency International Malaysia president Paul Low will be his cabinet minister in the war against corruption. My colleagues and I were speechless in front of the TV when that announcement was made. I went as far as tweeting "Bro @NajibRazak, terus terang saya cakap. Bro ada bola".

To invite your enemy or critic into your own office or home is only possible if you have nothing to hide.

In 2012/3, the Performance Management & Delivery Unit (Pemandu) urged a public consultation to prepare the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) 2.0. I remember hearing comments that some of the NGO reps, activists and government officers who participated in the Fighting Corruption workstream actually told the prime minister, "Sir, you gotta get this done. You need to have the political will and do this for the country."

What was it that they were referring to?

They wanted Najib to change the reporting practice of the Auditor-General's Report to three times a year instead of once a year. The series of three reports will be concise but must continue to contain key information, instead of a thick brick, so that none of the issues escape public attention. Just to put into context, Singapore's annual Auditor-General's Report (tabled once a year) is about 80 pages long while ours is 894 pages with extremely detailed information.

All eyes were on Najib at that time but I heard he was expressionless. No one knew what he was thinking. After hearing this at that time, I told my friends that Najib won't do it. Come on, who wants to change the format from a thick annual Audit Report into three series that will be tabled three times a year? The government will be grilled three times instead of one and there will be a high level of scrutiny on every single line each time.

### **Going a step further**

Weeks later, I was told that many of those in government were stunned when the prime minister made his decision. He actually agreed to do this three parts or series Audit Report which will be presented to all three times a year. He also went a step further and agreed that the issues highlighted in the reports will be hung out as dirty laundry permanently in a dashboard until action is taken. You can see it here.

Now, why would he agree to carry out these initiatives?

A week or two ago, I came across a blog post by my blogosphere senior Ahiruddin Attan. Apparently, Najib personally appointed journalist R Nadeswaran (aka Citizen Nades, left) to one of main panels of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

He is not exactly a friend of Barisan Nasional, if you know what I mean, and I believe many would have advised Najib against this decision. Yet, Najib and the MACC chief went ahead to give him his appointment letter.

Why?

On Wednesday, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and Deloitte were both summoned to meet the prime minister and cabinet to explain the allegations thrown at 1MDB. Who would have thought that the prime minister informed cabinet that he has instructed the auditor-general to independently verify 1MDB's account after which the report will be passed for transparent inspection to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)?

Let's be clear here. PAC members include critics like Nur Jazlan Mohamed as well as Tony Pua and Tan Seng Giaw, who are both senior DAP leaders.

Why?

There is a pattern here. I believe the message from Najib is clear and consistent to all since he became prime minister - "If any wrongdoing is proven, the law will be enforced without exception". This is transparency and accountability at a degree that no other prime ministers of Malaysia can boast of. There's just no two ways around this.

If what has been done by this administration is not 'extreme nudity', I don't know what it is.

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