

Muhyiddin, don't get cold feet on 1MDB stand

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By Lim Kit Siang

MP SPEAKS Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Umno president Muhyiddin Yassin should not have a sudden attack of 'cold feet', suffering withdrawal symptoms from his courageous and commendable statement on 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) on Friday night, but must continue to be bold and forthright to defend public interests and the principles of accountability and good governance in the handling of the RM42 billion 1MDB scandal.

Muhyiddin was denying the undeniable when he said yesterday that his Friday night statement on 1MDB did not contradict Prime Minister Najib Razak.

His so-called denial that he had contradicted Najib has only drawn further attention to the differences between Muhyiddin's seven-paragraph statement and the six-paragraph Prime Minister's Office (PMO) statement on the cabinet position on 1MDB released after the cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

A study of the two statements will reach the ineluctable conclusion that Muhyiddin's statement was not just "expressing what the cabinet had discussed with regard to the issue (1MDB) but also gone beyond that", when was in fact a repudiation of the PMO Statement, smashing it to smithereens.

Had Muhyiddin fully studied and realised the full implications of his Friday night statement when he lent his signature to it?

Deloitte not in picture

Firstly, Muhyiddin's statement in fact questioned as to how the cabinet could give 1MDB a clean bill of health and integrity, expressing confidence that no wrong-doing had been committed within 1MDB when, in Muhyiddin's words, "some of the accusations of wrongdoing hurled at the strategic investment fund were in relation to transactions made since 2009, which were not included in the 2013 accounts audited by Deloitte".

Exactly - these allegations which included "the joint venture between 1MDB and PetroSaudi International, as highlighted by several news portals recently", were not under the purview of the latest 1MDB auditors Deloitte, as they happened pre-2013 before Deloitte's appointment as auditors, and the cabinet could not rely on Deloitte to reach any conclusion that 1MDB had not committed any wrongdoing pre-2013.

In any event, how can the cabinet in a briefing lasting less than two hours by interested parties, act as judges, MACC, police and Attorney-General all rolled into one to clear the 1MDB of any wrongdoing?

From Muhyiddin's statement, it is dubious that the cabinet had passed a resolution

expressing confidence that 1MDB had not committed any wrongdoing.

The Malaysian public are entitled to know whether there was any such cabinet resolution giving the 1MDB a clean bill of health and integrity, or whether it was just a claim by the PMO Statement.

If there was such a cabinet resolution, who was the minister who proposed the cabinet resolution and the result of the vote, whether unanimously passed or whether a vote had been taken, stating who were the ministers in support and the ministers opposing the resolution?

Najib interested party in 1MDB

There is also the question of the validity and legality of such a cabinet motion, as the Prime Minister was an interested party, being the chairperson of the 1MDB board of advisors.

Did Najib declare his interest, ask Muhyiddin to take over the chair and withdrew during the cabinet discussion and decision on the 1MDB?

If there was no such cabinet resolution, how could the PMO tell a lie about what happened in cabinet, and how many times have the PMO Statements been telling lies?

Secondly, Muhyiddin was clearly contradicting Najib and the PMO statement when he urged the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to start its own investigation on 1MDB, without waiting for the auditor-general's report, as well as asking for an forensic audit to be conducted by the Auditor-General "to ensure there is no corruption in 1MDB transactions".

In fact, this will be the second proof that the cabinet could not have "expressed confidence that no wrongdoing has been committed within 1MDB", when the deputy prime minister is asking for a forensic audit "to ensure that there is no corruption in 1MDB transactions".

Malaysians are entitled to a clear answer: Did the cabinet last Wednesday issue a clean bill of health and integrity to 1MDB or not, and if, not how can the PMO statement be allowed to tell a lie about what transpired in cabinet?

Muhyiddin's Friday night statement was clearly in response to reports that Najib and his coterie of 1MDB advisers (clearly excluding Muhyiddin) were considering an exit strategy for 1MDB, which could involve 1MDB being left as a skeletal structure and possibly dissolved under a debt repayment plan in which most of its assets will be sold.

Dr M 'anti-national' too?

Hence the warning, and rightly, by Muhyiddin in his Friday night statement that there should be neither be a "bail out" nor "strip sale" of the firm's assets to pay off its hefty debts amounting to RM42 billion, referring specifically to the government suffering a loss if

restructuring of 1MDB involve the sales of Tun Razak Exchange and Bandar Malaysia land which had been obtained from the government "on the cheap".

Clearly, the lines in Umno and cabinet are being drawn between those who support Najib's PMO six-paragraph statement last Wednesday and Muhyiddin's seven-paragraph statement on Friday night.

For the first time, we are seeing Umno ministers like the Home Minister, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister, Abdul Rahman Dahlan, the Minister for Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism Hassan Malek, the Federal Territories Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and the Minister for Youth and Sports Khairy Jamaluddin coming out in open public support for Najib and the PMO statement.

Will there be any minister who is prepared to publicly back Muhyiddin for his Friday night statement?

For the past six years, 1MDB Scandal has brought Malaysia into great disrepute, both nationally and internationally.

I feel a sense of déjà vu when the Home Minister Zahid Hamidi accused the critics of 1MDB of launching "politically-motivated" attacks on 1MDB, the prime minister and Umno as I had to face such accusations when exposing the RM2.5 billion Bumiputera Finance scandal in 1984 and a string of other financial scandals under Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the former prime minister in the eighties and nineties.

I do not know whether Zahid would now include Mahathir among the "anti-national elements" who have political axes to grind in questioning the 1MDB scandal, but what is very clear is Zahid is himself guilty of the he hurled against others as it is evident he is motivated by a political agenda of his own in making such charges against critics of 1MDB.

Agong must speak up tomorrow

The 1MDB is a financial scandal affecting the whole nation and the entire citizenry. All cabinet Ministers must act in the interest of the nation and go beyond ;personal or party consideration.

As the 1MDB scandal is the No 1 financial scandal in the country, this issue should be addressed in the yang di pertuan agong's policy address when opening Parliament tomorrow.

On behalf of the government, the yang di pertuan agong should announce the establishment of a royal commission of inquiry into the RM42 billion 1MDB scandal, and the prime minister should also announce relinquishing his post as finance minister as it is most invidious for the prime minister to be placed in a situation of having to give blind and total support to the finance minister over the 1MDB scandal.

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