

Ambiga: Najib muzzling ministers on 1MDB

MalaysiaKini.com

June 1, 2015

By RK Anand

During last Friday's cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had reportedly issued an ultimatum to his ministers - toe his line on the debt-laden 1MDB or resign.

However, former Bar Council president Ambiga Sreenevasan found this unacceptable and asked if Najib was attempting to muzzle the cabinet members.

"One must ask if the prime minister should give them such a choice, for it means nobody is allowed to question his decisions. This is something the cabinet has to resolve.

"Is it stifling comments from his cabinet colleagues? Is it something these ministers are happy to go along with?" she asked.

Ambiga, who is the patron of NGO Negara Ku, said the situation would be different if it concerned a policy stand.

"For example, a move to abolish the death penalty. Then you can say 'quit if you disagree with this'. That is different.

"But the situation at hand is about unanswered questions surrounding 1MDB," she told Malaysiakini.

Collective responsibility

Ambiga also agreed with calls from the opposition and former finance minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah on the need for collective responsibility.

She said this is the convention in a government that practices the Westminster system.

"Although privately you may not agree (with a particular stand), publicly you must agree or otherwise step down

"The consequence of that is if 1MDB goes pear-shaped, then the entire cabinet has to resign, that is the convention.

"Whatever the case may be, this is now a cabinet responsibility. If indeed 1MDB becomes a disaster as predicted, they (ministers) must all resign, there is no choice," she added.

Meanwhile, Ambiga also reiterated the need to come clean on the issues concerning 1MDB.

"The questions asked are straightforward and not difficult.

"Getting the auditor-general to initiate a probe as well as (1MDB president Arul Kanda and former CEO Sharol Halmi) not turning up for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing are just tactics to waste time.

"If there is nothing wrong with the transactions, why the delay? This is what is on people's minds," she added.

Just answer 'em

Ambiga said Malaysians have become immune to inquiries that yield no results or amount to nothing.

"That is why there is little trust in this mode of handling the crisis," she noted.

Ambiga also found it unusual that Najib chooses to communicate with the people on this issue via FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on his blog.

"The fact they are dodging instead of answering is a cause of concern. Just answer the questions," she added.