

Najib again urged to go on leave
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The call to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to go on leave is piling up, with yet another scandal affecting his administration surfacing.

After DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang asked Najib to go on leave as prime minister and finance minister to allow for a full-fledged investigation into the 1MDB scandal by a Royal Commission of Inquiry, another opposition leader is demanding the same.

PAS deputy president Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man said the admission by Mara chairperson Annuar Musa that Najib himself had approved Mara's purchase of a property in Australia, which was bought at an allegedly inflated price, should be reason enough for the investigations to be done "without any disturbance".

"Annuar's admission signals that Umno leaders are not hesitating to bear the responsibility to answer controversial business decisions involving Najib.

"As Najib himself ordered the authorities to carry out transparent investigation into the case, it is only fair for Najib to take the first step and go on vacation," Tuan Ibrahim (photo) said in a statement today.

He said the people's perception of Najib and his leadership continued to worsen, with issues and scandals such as the 1MDB debts, Felda Global Venture (FGV) listing, Tabung Haji land deals with 1MDB and now the Mara property dealings in Australia, despite efforts by the government media to separate the Najib from all these controversies.

"The reality is that almost all the government's money pits and government-owned companies have been 'touched' with suspicious motives and do not benefit the country.

"With the ringgit weak, and the 1MDB debt that still had to be paid, do not be surprised if after this, all toll concession companies also start purchasing 1MDB land lots on grounds of investment. Toll concession companies get money from whom, if not the people?" he said.

On June 12, Lim said there was no need for Najib to resign as prime minister, as proposed by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, so as to allow a full investigation into the 1MDB finances.

Mahathir also said that Najib could come back as prime minister to lead the BN in the next general election "if no crime can be detected and all the money is returned".

Yesterday, Australian-based newspaper The Age reported that Mara, a government agency, purchased an apartment block dubbed "The Dudley" in Melbourne at an inflated price, the excess sum of which was channelled back to Mara officials as kickbacks.

Purchase of three other buildings by Mara reported

The Age said the Mara officials used government funds to bid up the price for the Melbourne apartment block from A\$17.8 million (RM51.5 million) to A\$22.5 million (RM65 million).

The extra A\$4.75 million (RM13.7 million) was allegedly sent back to Malaysia as kickbacks for the officials involved.

Also today, PKR-linked NGO National Oversight and Whistleblowers (NOW) called on the government to come clean on whether Mara's purchase of three other properties in Australia also involved kickbacks.

The three other purchases made by Mara at a total cost of A\$63.5 million (RM185.84 million), using shelf companies based in tax havens and which was also reported by The Age, are located at 746 Swanston Street, 51 Queen Street and 333 Exhibition Street, all in Melbourne.

Mara chairperson Annuar said today said any investment made by Mara had to be approved by the Finance Ministry or the government economic council chaired by Najib.

"It is part of the procedure. It is brought to the Mara council and then to the Rural and Regional Development Ministry before it goes to the Finance Ministry or the economic council," Annuar told reporters at a press conference at the Mara headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

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