

## **Muhyiddin zips lips while Najib sinks deeper**

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**By Bob Teoh**

COMMENT The conspirational silence of Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin is telling enough that Najib Abdul Razak's latest spin to extricate himself from the 1MDB scandal may ironically lead to his demise as prime minister. That his own cousin, Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein is also weighing his options quietly says just as much.

Najib is just left with his minions like Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin to hide the naked truth, shame and fear with a fig leaf in the same fashion as Adam and Eve when God found out their sin.

Yet Najib is still beating his chest like the laughable brave Bugis warrior he claims he is. He now says the relentless disclosures over the 1MDB scandal is one big lie and is threatening to beat the daylights out of Sarawak Report for allegedly defaming him and the nation. This is more so now that Thai police has arrested Xavier Andre Justo in Bangkok for supposedly spilling the beans and tipping off Sarawak Report.

For context, let's have a look at what actually transpired following the arrest of Justo, 49, a Swiss living in Thailand six days ago.

Yesterday, Najib said the government will take action against whistle blower site Sarawak Report over its allegations against the heavily debt-laden 1MDB.

"If we get the admission (by Justo) and clear proof submitted by the Thai government through the police, the Malaysian government will make the appropriate decision," he told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting.

Justo, who was a director of Petro Saudi International, allegedly passed over information relating to transactions between the company and 1MDB to Sarawak Report.

Sarawak Report subsequently alleged that US\$700 million in a joint venture between the two companies was siphoned out to a company owned by billionaire Jho Low, who is close to the prime minister's family.

Earlier yesterday, Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the arrest of Justo can help set the record straight on allegations against 1MDB which is saddled with RM42 billion of debts.

He said distorted information allegedly leaked by Justo to online publications had "tainted 1MDB's image", and he hoped Justo would be brought to justice.

He added that the arrest of Xavier Justo has revealed new information on the 1MDB issue and that Justo used distorted facts on 1MDB to blackmail it.

Within an earshot away, Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has also claimed Justo has revealed to Thai investigators the names of several Malaysians who supposedly asked him to manipulate facts from the information that was downloaded from PetroSaudi communication system, but he did not say who these Malaysians are.

Zahid also claimed that initial investigations showed that Justo was responsible for providing incorrect information to Sarawak Report and said Sarawak Report had in turn become a source of false information in reports by The Edge and other media.

Zahid told reporters in Putrajaya on Wednesday that the information reported by Sarawak Report and later reproduced by The Edge was untrue, because the facts had been “twisted” and had threatened to take action against The Edge and its publisher, Tong Kooi Ong, which may include revoking its publishing licence.

### **Unpacking spin and bluff**

As usual Najib and his minions may just be blowing hot air. Let’s unpack their own spin and bluff.

Sarawak Report is a London-based web radio and news portal. Any defamation action, civil or criminal, against the whistle blower is likely to be initiated in London under British laws and not in Thailand or Malaysia. So Najib cannot expect any half-past-six judgment in his favour there.

Further, for any defamation action to succeed one has to show that he or she has indeed a reputation to speak of in the first place. Just imagine if Dr Mahathir Mohamad volunteered to be a witness to Najib’s credibility. We may end up seeing the plaintiff squirming to defend himself as a serial liar and crime minister. Aiyoh, habislah kembara Bugis ni!

To complicate matters, Petro Saudi International is also a London-domiciled company and Justo is a Swiss national and putting them on trial in Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur may not seem so easy. Both the company and 1MDB itself would no doubt would be called to give evidence. Question is, can they stand up to the grilling?

Then comes the next question? What is the charge against Justo (photo)? The Thai police are looking at allegations of blackmail. Najib and his minions are claiming Justo has tampered with the data he’s got and passed it on to Sarawak Report and subsequently picked up by The Edge and others and has gone virtual.

So what are the criminal elements? Extortion, data tampering or wilful publication of false information? Najib and his minions now don’t look quite so smart with their bluff.

What is even more mind-boggling is that Oxford-educated Khairy has suddenly seen the light of revelation of new information” coming out from Justo’s arrest in Bangkok. Zahid, who has a Doctor of Philosophy in Communication by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) was

in the blur until Justo's arrest was communicated to him. Hello, where was he all this while?

As for Jho Low, this guy is too close to Rosmah Mansor and her son from her previous marriage, so the chinaman is okay.

Another feature of Najib's bluff is that either he or 1MDB have consistently confirmed the substance of the massive disclosures by the Sarawak Report over a lengthy period of time by their mere defence of their innocence of criminal negligence of fiduciary duties. For instance, Najib just recently asked for six months to sort out the mother of all scandals. What is there for Najib to sort out if Sarawak Report or The Edge have lied?

Najib, as Prime Minister, Finance Minister and adviser to 1MDB has free access to all documents and information relating to 1MDB. So too with Zahid and Khairy by virtue of the fact they are in Najib's cabinet. Were they all asleep when Justo was busy manufacturing lies about 1MDB?

What about 1MDB? Maybe they didn't have time to spot the lies because Najib was busy sacking one CEO after another. Maybe the recently appointed 1MDB CEO, Arul Kanda Kandasamy (photo), 38, is too young to spot lies. However, he is old enough to tell some lies of his own.

For instance, he claimed some of the money has come back and now safely residing in a Swiss bank in Singapore. He claimed he saw the money, or maybe he saw the statements which said the money is there and later the money is not hard cash after all but "units", so we were told by Najib's ministry.

Through all the fluff and bluff, here's the conclusion of the matter. Najib has to go now. Each day he stays as PM, Malaysia's international image is tarnished by that extent. And he can take both Khairy and Zahid with him. So, we will all live happily ever after (until Muhyiddin takes over).

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