

Is Najib truly innocent in 1MDB fiasco?

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COMMENT Najib Abdul Razak, the beleaguered prime minister of Malaysia, is not alone in the entire 1MDB scandal, but he must assume the primary responsibility for the disappearance of RM42 billion, funds primarily collected from the public.

While the loss of RM42 billion might not have directly implicated Najib, but how a portion of the funds amounting to US\$700 million or RM2.6 billion got deposited into his private bank accounts needs to be explained. He cannot run away from this!

No shrewd politician would have allowed such an amount to be directly placed into his or her account. Corrupt politicians would normally park their ill-begotten wealth in the accounts of their nominees or friends abroad. This is normal practice and this why tracing the illegally acquired wealth of politicians is a difficult process.

Najib remarked that if he wanted, he could have siphoned off the funds through other nefarious ways and not in his accounts. Only somebody who is plain stupid would have brought the funds and deposited them in his or her account.

Political sycophants are already active in defending Najib. Some cabinets ministers are indeed advising Najib not to lodge police reports, since The Wall Street Journal's (WSJ) accusations are mere allegations. Even some PAS leaders, who had been vociferous in their criticisms of wrong-doings, are defending Najib by casting doubts on the report by WSJ.

In the beginning, Najib tried to pin the blame on Dr Mahathir Mohamad, accusing the former prime minister of being in cohorts with others in trying to bring him down.

Najib accused Mahathir of undermining his elected position and for not listening to the prime minister. In a direct confrontation with Mahathir, his former mentor, Najib blamed Mahathir of plotting to overthrow a democratically-elected government!

People not kept informed

Some Malaysian agencies including that of the Attorney-General's Chambers, have been privy to the information that was published by WSJ. But until today, none of these departments have initiated investigations. Even if an investigation has been commenced, the public have not been informed.

Even the Governor of Bank Negara, Zeti Akhtar Aziz, most likely to be knowledgeable about the entry of funds into the bank accounts of Najib, is silent on this matter.

If Najib resigns, the head of Zeti (photo) must roll as well. She has been in this cushy job for years but has never alerted the public about the wrongdoings in the financial sector and

why the Malaysian currency has plummeted over the past few months.

I doubt that the Commercial Crime Division of the Malaysian police has initiated any investigation to date. There seems to be some kind of communication gap between the office of prosecution and the police department. Our gung-ho IGP is nowhere to be seen. Apparently, he has stopped Twittering arrests and investigations!

Najib is right to some extent. No politicians in high office would allow the entry of funds to be deposited in their accounts. It would not just be political suicide but a criminal offence that would cause them to be jailed for years and to become political outcasts.

However, the months before the last general election of 2013 were not ordinary times. BN was probably pressed for funds to conduct the election and to do all the necessary things to win.

The prospect of Pakatan Rakyat winning the elections was high and that Umno did not have the luxury of time to organise the elections in the manner it wanted.

Since the BN/Umno elections machinery primarily depended on the availability of funds to buy political patronage and support, the period before elections can be described as extraordinary.

He's not guilty?

Thus, under extraordinary or exceptional circumstances, there is tendency for politicians and heads of state to do strange things.

Nobody is accusing of Najib of wrongdoing, but he cannot simply defend himself by stating that he is not guilty of receiving funds from companies registered in strange places.

He must commence legal proceedings against WSJ. The Malaysian law enforcement agencies must discharge their responsibilities.

But WSJ is no pushover. One of its editors have said that their story about funds going into the private bank accounts of Najib is solid and that they would not back out even if Najib takes them to court.

Is Najib really going to pursue this matter? Or is he going to open the Pandora's Box about the 1MDB scandal and how it had spread its tentacles beyond Malaysia?

Even if Najib takes WSJ to court, the political damage has already been done. Malaysians, and even members of his own party, are not convinced that Najib is telling the truth. Too many scandals and blatant cases of corruption have rendered the BN and its dominant partner Umno without any political legitimacy or moral authority to govern.

There is a crises of governance or legitimacy in Malaysia. For this crisis to dissipate, hard

decisions have to be taken. Top on the list is the resignation of Najib as the prime minister of Malaysia. His tenure is almost untenable!

To quote a line from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, we are underlings."

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