

Let's be fair to Najib, say two 'Tan Sri'

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By Alyaa Azhar

Respectable public figures have given their say about the 1MDB fiasco involving Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and two of them believe that fairness should be accorded to the premier.

Social Care Foundation chairperson Robert Phang, when asked whether Najib should go on leave while investigations are underway, believes that the public must listen to Najib's explanation first.

"Whatever that has been reported is only one side. We may or may not like him, but what that has been reported can also be considered as hearsay," Phang (photo) told Malaysiakini.

"I strongly believe we must follow the natural justice principle. The right to be heard has to be given.

"Let's be fair to Najib, we have to listen to his explanation. No one is guilty until proven so," said Phang, who is also panel commissioner of the Malaysia Anti-Crime Commission.

Meanwhile, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli) director Ramon Navaratnam, also pointed out that allegations thus far had only been "hearsay".

"So far, there's nothing concrete against him, it's all a lot of hearsay," he said.

"Has it been proven that the money was used for personal use?"

When pointed out that Najib has neither denied nor admitted that the RM2.6 billion was transferred into his personal bank accounts, Ramon said there was no point for Najib to do so since whatever he says would be subject to criticism from both sides.

"The task force is investigating, let him answer their questions. He can't be answerable to everybody.

"(And) why should he declare his accounts to everybody? Let him do that in a court of law," he said.

Asking all to treat Najib with "some dignity", Ramon reminded that in any value system, one should not simply falsely accuse someone.

"But if the accusation is based on facts and evidence, then the price has to be paid," he said.

Culture of the crab

Without a sense of balance, Ramon, who is also corporate advisor to the Sunway Group of companies, cautioned that there would be anarchy.

“Then the next person who goes up, you can tear him down also,” he said, pointing out that the “crab theory” was at work.

“We are developing the culture of the crab, clawing each other down,” he said.

Former Sabah state secretary Simon Sipaun (photo), on the other hand, said the prime minister should indeed go on leave.

“When you have an ongoing investigation, the person to be affected by the investigation should step aside so that the task force can do its business independently and more effectively.

“Because while he is the prime minister, he is also the boss of these four people, so what do you expect?”

The Wall Street Journal last week revealed that RM2.6 billion of 1MDB’s funds was deposited into Najib’s personal bank accounts.

A special task force was then formed comprising Bank Negara governor Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail, Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar, and Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief Abu Kassim Mohamed.

The task force has since frozen six bank accounts related to the case.

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