

Umno supreme council members rebut Dr M

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By Kow Gah Chie

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak never told Umno that RM2.6 billion had gone into his personal bank account and was used for the last general election, said two of the party's supreme council members.

Tajuddin Abdul Rahman and Reezal Merican Naina Merican rebutted former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who said Umno members **were told** that money was used to help finance the election campaign.

"Najib only said the money wasn't from 1MDB and he never used for his personal gain. I heard it myself," said Reezal (*photo*), who is also Kepala Batas MP.

Echoing this, Tajuddin challenged Mahathir to list out the details in Najib alleged admission that 1MDB's money was used for election purposes.

"How does Mahathir know? When did he speak with the prime minister?" asked Tajuddin, the deputy agriculture and agro-based industry minister.

"1MDB never financed our election. We have (our own) sources of funds for the party," he said, without divulging more.

Mahathir in his blog yesterday said: "There is no denial the money was deposited in the private account. The explanation to Umno is that it was for the elections. Umno seems satisfied.

"Don't they know that government money cannot be used to help a political party to win elections?" he queried.

'Wrong to use state-owned firms'

Tajuddin agreed it was wrong for any party to use state-owned firms and government-linked companies (GLCs) for election purposes.

However, he said, the detractors should know the distinction between state-owned firm's money used for elections and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes.

"You know CSR programmes? They are not meant for elections. You better differentiate that," he argued, adding the country's laws didn't specifically mention that GLCs and state owned firms cannot carry out CSR programmes during elections.

He also alleged the GLCs of the Penang state government continued their CSR programmes during elections.

"Let say 1MDB did help the poor and send people for umrah, is that for election purposes?"

"From what I know, 1MDB has done so much CSR work, so many people have benefited. We must give credit to the good work they are doing.

"Likewise, there are so many GLCs doing CSR. Is there anything wrong with that?" asked Tajuddin.

He criticised 1MDB for biting more than it could chew where the firm resorted to borrow huge loans without proper planning to end up in a financial dilemma.

"They are ambitious, they wanted to be the one of the biggest of independent power producers as well as a major developer, so they borrowed to be great.

"However 1MDB has changed its strategy by agreeing to partner and team up with others, he noted.

The government is in the midst of resolving 1MDB's problems through the rationalisation of 1MDB. Also it's being investigated simultaneously by the special task force, the Auditor-General Department and Public Accounts Committee, he added.

"This is the right thing to do. Don't bring in so many issues and drag so many people based on speculation," he advised Mahathir and other detractors.

"Be professional in making allegations and comments," was his parting shot.