

Here's what PM David Cameron should tell Najib

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By Tony Pua

MP SPEAKS Dear Mr Prime Minister,

Welcome back to Malaysia. It is an honour that you have decided to return to my country so soon after your last trip in April 2012.

Let me first take this opportunity to congratulate you on the recent successful re-election of your government. For all its oft-cited shortcomings, the British democratic system remains among the most free and fair in the world, with the Westminster an institution most countries like ours look up to.

I am also extremely encouraged by the increasing assertiveness of the UK's foreign policy which seeks not only to serve the British national interest but equally to establish a minimum moral and ethical standards in a world increasingly dominated by greed and self-interest.

At a forum entitled 'Building the world we want by 2030 through transparency and accountability' during the 69th UN General Assembly on Sept 24, 2014, you highlighted the fact that "the more corruption in your society, the poorer your people are." You admonished those who refused to deal with corruption. "Some people don't want to include these issues in the goals. I say: don't let them get away with it," you said.

Just last month, you wrote in the Huffington Post to implore the G7 to place priority on fighting corruption, using the Fifa scandal to provide the impetus. You argued eloquently that "...at the heart of Fifa is a lesson about tackling corruption that goes far deeper. Corruption at Fifa was not a surprise. For years it lined the pockets of those on the inside and was met with little more than a reluctant sigh.

"The same is true of corruption the world over. Just as with Fifa, we know the problem is there, but there is something of an international taboo over pointing the finger and stirring up concerns... But we just don't talk enough about corruption. This has got to change."

You have since 2013 led a mission to ensure Britain's network of overseas territories and Crown dependencies, like Cayman and British Virgin Islands, signed up to a new clampdown on tax evasion, aimed at promoting transparency and exchange of information between tax jurisdictions.

As you said, "We need to know more about who owns which company - beneficial ownership - because that is how a lot of people and a lot of companies avoid tax, using secretive companies in secretive locations."

Yesterday, your speech in Singapore was pointed and direct. You told the listening

Singapore students that “London is not a place to stash your dodgy cash”.

“I want Britain to be the most open country in the world for investment. But I want to ensure that all this money is clean money. There is no place for dirty money in Britain. Indeed, there should be no place for dirty money anywhere.”

You rightly pointed out that “by lifting the shroud of secrecy”, we can “stop corrupt officials or organised criminals using anonymous shell companies to invest their ill-gotten gains in London property, without being tracked down.”

Need to make the same points in our country

We, Malaysians need you to make the very same points in our country. Making the above points in Singapore is good, but it is like preaching to the converted as our neighbour is ranked 7th in the 2014 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index.

The leaders of the Malaysian government on the other hand, are embroiled in a financial scandal of epic proportions.

In particular, our Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, whom you are to meet has been recently accused by the Wall Street Journal that he has received in his personal account cash deposits amounting to nearly US\$700 million in 2013. It is a damning but substantiated allegation which he has steadfastly refused to deny.

Some, if not all of the money could be linked to state-owned 1MDB which is crippled by US\$11 billion of debt, requiring billions of ringgit of emergency bailout funds by the Malaysian tax-payers. I am certain that you have been briefed on leaked documents clearly points to an incriminating trail of plunder and international money-laundering across Singapore, the Middle East, the United States, Switzerland and yes, the United Kingdom.

The New York Times and other media outfits have also raised questions about how his family owns properties, in New York, Beverly Hills and London worth tens of millions of dollars. These properties were purchased with the same opaque ‘shell companies’ which you have rightly censured.

The sheer scale of the sums involved makes the Fifa bribery scandal look like child’s play. This is the very reason for the drastic iron-fisted actions Najib has taken over the past two weeks. As you would have found out by now, he has sacked the attorney-general who was leading the investigating taskforce on the above scandals.

He has also sacked the Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin for questioning the 1MDB shenanigans in a cabinet reshuffle designed to stifle inquiries into the subject matter.

The newly promoted Deputy Prime Minister, Zahid Hamidi, who is also the Home Minister, acted to suspend the country’s leading business papers, The Edge Weekly and The Financial Daily last week because they played a leading role in uncovering the multi-billion

dollar scam to defraud Malaysians. Can you ever imagine the UK Financial Times being suspended?

First MP to be sued by a PM

I have on the other hand, been in a relentless pursuit to uncover the conspiracy to defraud the country at the very highest levels since 2010. Earlier in March this year, I became the first Member of Parliament to be sued for defamation by a prime minister in the country in a blatant attempt to muzzle my strident criticisms.

When that failed, I have found out last week that I've also become the first Member of Parliament ever to be barred from travelling overseas, without any reasons, valid or otherwise, being provided. The only plausible reason for such a drastic action against my right to travel is that I will soon be arrested for my troubles to expose the truth and highlight the staggering size of embezzlement, misappropriation and criminal breach of trust.

If the local media's police sources were to be believed, I am most ironically being investigated under the recently amended Criminal Penal Code for "activities detrimental to parliamentary democracy". It is a 'heinous' crime which carries up to a 20-year jail sentence.

Mr Prime Minister,

You have written that you "need to find ways of giving more support and encouragement to those in business, civil society and the media who are working to fight corruption".

Malaysians need your "support and encouragement" today. While we do not need your interference over our sovereign affairs, we also do not need any pretentious praise embedded into polite diplomatic speak which will lend any legitimacy desperately sought by Najib's administration.

We also hope that the worthy mission to increase trade relations between our two countries with great historical links will not relegate your goals to "make the global business environment more hostile to corruption and to support the investigators and prosecutors who can help bring the perpetrators to justice."

We pray for your wisdom to speak resolutely on Britain's zero tolerance against corruption and money-laundering. For Malaysia, the façade of a moderate Westminster-like democracy masks many ugly truths of social injustice, political oppression and extensive corruption.

Like you, I've had the immeasurable privilege of completing my degree in the best university in the UK, which ranks among the best in the world (if not the best). We completed the same course in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) but I was six years your junior.

While you received a first class honours and I missed the cut, I hope that our alma mater has embedded in us the moral fortitude to play our little roles in building a better world.

I will end my letter with a quote from our fellow alumnus and PPE graduate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who most pertinently said, "Sometimes I think that a parody of democracy could be more dangerous than a blatant dictatorship, because that gives people an opportunity to avoid doing anything about it".

Thank you for listening, Mr Prime Minister.

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