

C4 calls PM's bluff on political financing

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's claim that the BN is keen to reveal its sources of income is insincere, says corruption watchdog Centre to Combat Corruption & Cronyism (C4).

The group's executive director Cynthia Gabriel said the matter was first mooted by Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) back in 2010 and BN was not favourable of the idea then.

"When TI-M attempted to meet BN in 2010 to discuss ways to make political funding more transparent, only one of his ministers turned up for the discussion.

"The minister did so as he represented the Prime Minister's Department," Gabriel said.

Yesterday, Najib (photo) said Umno was willing to disclose the sources of its income on condition that DAP does the same.

Of late, Umno leaders, such as supreme council member Abdul Rahman Dahlan, have been suggesting that Najib is allowed to hold the party's money in trust.

Some observers believe that this could be a reference to allegations that nearly US\$700 million was transferred into Najib's private bank accounts, although Rahman never explicitly said so.

This allegation was made in a July 3 report in The Wall Street Journal. Najib has never directly denied this allegation, instead choosing to state that he never used 1MDB money for "personal gain".

Gabriel said that although C4 supports regulation of political funding, the most pressing matter Najib has to address now is the allegations raised by WSJ.

"We ask, yet again, for him to confirm to the Malaysian people as to whether:

- Was the RM2.6 billion was transferred (from companies linked to 1MDB) into his private accounts?; and
- Was the money used to bankroll BN during the last general election?

"We would not be in this imbroglio if Malaysia has proper political financing laws, access to information laws that define limits to political financing, transparent and accountable systems are put in place and the expenditure of political parties during elections are audited," she said.

A political financing law, Gabriel said, should include the following provisions:

1. Provide public access to political party accounts, list of donors and types of expenditure.
2. Limit the amount donated by individuals or corporations.
3. Bar party funds from being put into private accounts.

She said the Election Offences Act 1954 should also require election expenses to be independently audited by certified auditors before submission to the Election Commission.

"The EC must also be given more power to enforce transparency and accountability in the funding processes during elections," Gabriel added.

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