An eventful three months, but will Najib get the message?
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COMMENT History is written by the victors, as the saying goes.

It has been a memorable three months and a tumultuous week for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak. The PM and Umno president looked tense in his Merdeka Day message on Sunday as well as at the Merdeka day parade, a day after the mammoth rally in Kuala Lumpur and worldwide.

Four months ago, when Najib was supposed to speak at a dialogue on 1MDB called Nothing2Hide, he did not turn up.

Najib was also supposed to be the keynote speaker at the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), which is to showcase Malaysia's move in its fight against corruption and to promote transparency, and that did not materialise; and minister Paul Low was despatched to do the honours.

His absence was the result of one thing, and no, it is not due to the ring worn by Sauron in the epic 'The Lord of the Rings' saga, but to 1MDB, his brainchild that ironically has now become the butt of jokes.

Najib was not present at the Nothing2Hide conference following an alleged security threat, and this led former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad who showed up at the event to comment at the time that the PM need not fear him as he is just an ordinary man, and he doesn't have guns and cannot harm anyone.

Yesterday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Paul Low admitted he had advised Najib not to come to the prestigious international conference for fear of a "hostile" reception, a curious claim for a conference held at the administrative capital in Putrajaya and not in Timbuktu or some foreign country.

Will history remember Najib in the last three months as a PM who is unwilling to answer his critics over the 1MDB saga following allegations that RM2.6 billion was deposited in his personal accounts two years ago?

Or will history be rewritten where the future generations of Malaysians would remember the drive of Bersih 4 to have clean and fair elections, and supporting urgings for Najib to step down?

Certainly, Bersih 4 saw a crowd of 100,000 throng the streets in bright yellow, where a day earlier the government had gazetted the T-shirt and the words 'Bersih 4' as being banned and illegal.

The 'illegal' rally had also seen one of its major critics turned supporter of public rallies to depose Najib, namely Mahathir, to come not once but twice. Now the nonagenarian Mahathir is also being subject to investigation by the police for attending the rally.

What does honesty and integrity mean?

Yesterday also saw Transparency International (TI) chair Jose Ugaz openly criticising Najib and questioning what the words 'honesty' and 'integrity' means to Malaysia.

Ugaz, a Peruvian jurist, had served as an ad hoc attorney and said while the Malaysian government had purportedly taken measures and initiatives to tackle corruption, the 1MDB crackdown appears to say otherwise.

"We want to see more progress, but that cannot happen while there are unanswered questions about the US$700 million that made its way into the PM's personal bank account.

"In recent weeks we have seen the attorney-general suddenly replaced, the 1MDB task force suspended, investigators at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) arrested or transferred, and newspapers suspended for reporting on the matter," he said, adding that these are not the actions of a government that is fighting corruption.

He noted that promises of reform alone would not restore confidence and trust.

"There are two questions that need to be answered, who paid the money and why? And where did it go?" he asked further, adding that only one man could answer those questions, in an obvious reference to Najib who was missing from the conference.

"If that does not happen then only a fully independent investigation, free from political interference, can uncover the truth. Until that happens, no claim from the government on anti-corruption will be credible," he had said in the federal administrative capital.

Is that what we are seeing now, as Ugaz suggested?

I had also posed in an earlier comment piece whether the removal of Abdul Gani Patail as the attorney-general was done this way, following BN strategic communications director Abdul Rahman Dahlan having mentioned the possibility of the need to "take out people" after an alleged charge sheet against the PM emerged.

Again the question remains, and maybe this is something we will never know, despite the comment piece citing those in the know.

How will the country's history be?

Does it take a foreigner like Ugaz, or the 100,000 Bersih protesters who include Mahathir urging Najib's removal, to drive home the message?

It would be interesting to see 10 or 20 years from now how the country's history would be written, and what our children and grandchildren would study in their textbooks, as we had known Malaysia's glorious history in the fight for independence, the formation of Malaysia, and so on.

Will they remember the two missed opportunities for Najib to reply, including at the international anti-corruption conference that Najib was supposed to attend but had given a miss, along with the scandal of the removal of Muhyiddin Yassin and Shafie Apdal as deputy prime minister and minister respectively?

And despite claims of lower Malay turnout compared to past Bersih rally, it cannot be assumed that those who did not attend the rally are supportive of Najib as claimed. If you walk down the street today, you will find many including those in Umno who are not supportive of their party president.

Will our children remember the day Malaysians stood tall together peacefully with their brothers and sisters regardless of race, religion and others fighting for a better Malaysia to ensure accountability by the country's leaders to own up?

Only time will tell.

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