

Foreign delegate: Najib can't hide RM2.6b in digital age

MalaysiaKini.com

Sept 4th, 2015

Nigel Aw

The government cannot conceal information on the RM2.6 billion deposited into Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's personal bank accounts in the digital age, said Global Investigative Journalism Network executive director David Kaplan today.

Speaking at the 16th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) in Putrajaya, Kaplan said those attempting to cover up the matter are out of touch with the times.

"They can't close off a country anymore. These people are living in another era if they think they can hide US\$700 million going through their bank accounts.

"This is the digital age, people in power are going to have to be accountable," he told journalists after a session titled: 'Investigative Journalism: The New Muckrakers'.

On July 4, it was reported by the Wall Street Journal and Sarawak Report that US\$681 million (RM2.6 billion) was deposited into Najib's accounts.

The prime minister has insisted that he did not take public funds for personal gain while his supporters claimed the RM2.6 billion was a "political donation" from the Middle East.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) also confirmed that it was a donation.

However, there has been no explanation with regard to the RM42 million deposited into his accounts through former 1MDB subsidiary, SRC International Sdn Bhd.

The MACC is still investigating this issue.

Najib unlikely to resign soon

During the session earlier, Kaplan, who has been an investigative journalist for more than three decades, said Najib is not likely to resign as prime minister over this scandal any time soon as the elements needed for his exit are absent.

He compared the current situation to US president Richard Nixon's resignation over the Watergate scandal in 1974.

Kaplan (photo) said there were three elements that led to Nixon's exit.

"There were three forces in US: there was an investigation by the judiciary and by an independent media led by Washington Post and there was an impeachment hearing by Congress," he said.

At the time, Kaplan said, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was feeding information to the judiciary and leaking it to Washington Post, which was pushing public sentiment and Congress to investigate.

"The problem with Malaysia is prosecutors aren't going forward with anything. The Parliament is not going forward with its own investigation.

"So, you got independent media out there alone and they are being banned and there are movements to restrict them further," Kaplan said.

After the scandal broke out, Najib had attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail replaced with Mohamed Apandi Ali who ended a multi-agency collaborative probe into the matter.

The MACC is now continuing the investigation on its own.

Najib also paralysed Parliament's investigation by appointing the chief and three members of the Public Accounts Committee into the government.

Plans have also been announced to introduce new legislation to tighten control on the online media.

Prior to that, the government on July 27 suspended The Edge Weekly and The Edge Financial Daily for three months for their critical reporting on 1MDB.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/311099>