

'I connected Justo to The Edge but no conspiracy there'

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Sarawak Report editor Clare Rewcastle-Brown said the New Straits Times' front page story today is part of a hatchet job against her by the Umno-linked daily.

The newspaper today cited private correspondence between Rewcastle-Brown, several opposition members and the man who allegedly leaked documents on 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) Xavier Justo, as evidence of a conspiracy to topple Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Rewcastle-Brown said that while she did connect Justo to The Edge, she did not collect any payment for it.

She said she also "sounded out" various quarters on Justo's offer but none took it up except for The Edge.

"When he offered me money to help him in his quest to find a buyer for his information I refused to accept it or indeed any payment whatsoever.

"I did not approve of Justo's (photo) desire to be paid for this story, but I understood it and there is no crime, as the NST is seeking to allege, in paying someone for a news story," she said.

Incentives for whistleblowers

While it may be morally suspect, she said, she understood that whistleblowers required incentives for the risks they were taking.

Justo, she noted, took considerable risk which has now landed him in a jail in Thailand over alleged extortion involving his former employer Saudi oil company PetroSaudi, relating its deal with 1MDB.

"However, what the New Straits Times will certainly know if they have read my Whatsapp messages to Justo, is that none of the various politicians they are trying to propagandise as being in some kind of undetermined conspiracy with me, was willing to do so.

"I did sound out quite a good number of people to see who might be interested in dealing with Justo. But no one wanted to engage with him.

"No plot there then, despite the allegations!" she said.

She added that it is true that she would toast Najib's departure as NST reported, but this should not come as a surprise.

"I am happy to confirm that I will celebrate if Najib at last proves himself a gentleman and admits he no longer has the authority and credibility needed to govern his disillusioned party and country.

"This is because I am a journalist who has exposed many crimes under his watch, not because I am being paid as part of some ill-defined conspiracy to criticise an innocent man!" she said.

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