

Seven years on, it looks like Najib does not care
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Kee Thuan Chye

COMMENT Today, Najib Razak celebrates his 7th anniversary as prime minister of Malaysia, a position he assumed in 2009. I'm compelled to think that only for that year, April 3 was the real April Fool's Day. Malaysians were the fools.

In my article for the book 'Tipping Points' (edited by Oon Yeoh) in which I assessed Najib's first 100 days as prime minister, I raised serious doubt about his ability to run the country. I also questioned his slogan '1Malaysia' which was supposedly aimed at uniting the people. I said it would end up being an empty slogan.

I repeated my criticism of it shortly afterwards in [an article](#) for *Malaysiakini*. It was in relation to a speech he had made at the 2009 Umno General Assembly.

"Najib Razak contradicted himself ... (when) he spoke of the all-embracing 1Malaysia concept on one hand and he spoke of the need to retain the New Economic Policy (NEP) on the other. The Native Americans in old cowboy movies might have said of his speech that it came from a forked tongue.

"How can you have the NEP and at the same time say that we are all 1Malaysia? The NEP is exclusive to a particular group of people; such exclusivity sets them apart. There is no 1Malaysia then; there are 2Malaysias.

"Does Najib not see that or is his 1Malaysia idea merely salesman talk or PR spin or marketing label?"

Sure enough, Najib's actions increasingly contradicted his rhetoric. In subsequent years, he even resorted to racially divisive tactics to protect his own position. So, eventually, he abandoned the 1Malaysia slogan.

Bring into disrepute

Nearly two months ago, he celebrated his 40th year in politics. Amazing! After so many years, you would have thought his public service record would have improved. Instead, he has brought not only his name but that of the whole country into disrepute.

He is at the centre of a scandal that has hurt the country and made him the butt of many jokes. He has even been called a clown. And thanks to brave activist Fahmi Reza, the cartoon of Najib as a clown has lately been surfacing not only at home but also internationally.

It's clear that Najib bears the mark of a man who is intent on being a politician instead of a statesman. There's a big difference between the two.

Questions remain unanswered over the RM2.6 billion scandal he's embroiled in. It's now been alleged by *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) that the amount is more.

1MDB, which he set up and chairs, is under investigation in a few countries - the United States, Singapore, Hong Kong, Switzerland. Luxembourg joined the fray only a few days ago.

France is also investigating allegations of bribes having been paid to French officials in Malaysia's purchase of the Scorpene submarines in 2002, when Najib was defence minister.

As for the RM2.6 billion scandal, the new Attorney-General (AG), Mohd Apandi Ali, hand-picked by Najib to replace Abdul Gani Patail, has, however, cleared the latter of any wrongdoing more than two months ago.

It is heartening to note, though, that Apandi said there was "insufficient evidence" to incriminate Najib. Does this imply that there is evidence, only that the AG thinks it is "insufficient"? If so, the AG needs to ask for further investigations. Instead, he called for the case to be immediately closed.

He revealed that the Saudi royal family gave Najib US\$681 million in 2013, but Najib later returned US\$620 million because the entire sum was “not utilised”. Oh? How come we never heard of this earlier? If Najib had indeed returned the money - which makes it sound like he’s a real honest man, an exemplary leader - why didn’t he himself announce it?

Crafted, contrived letter

Last week, on its TV documentary ‘State of Fear: Murder and Money in Malaysia’, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation revealed - for the first time ever - a letter allegedly from Prince Saud Abdulaziz Majid Al-Saud saying that he was granting Najib “an additional sum of up to US\$375,000,000” in recognition of Najib’s “significant contribution to the Islamic world”.

Some quarters are claiming that the letter is fake, and that it was planted to corroborate what Apandi had said about the money to Najib having come from the Saudi royal family.

The letter does look contrived. It also appears to be worded in a way as to affirm the numerous claims Najib’s lackeys have been making over the past several months to support his innocence.

Phrases that seem crafted for this dubious purpose include “You shall have absolute discretion to determine how the Gift shall be utilised” ... “I do not expect to receive any personal benefit ... as a result of the Gift” ... “The Gift should not in any event be construed as an act of corruption” (it seems odd that the prince would have such prescience to include that) ... “corruption is against the principles of Islam” (it seems a redundant platitude for the prince to utter).

But let’s suppose that the letter is real. If it were so, the next suspicious question to ask would be: why then didn’t Najib produce this letter as evidence from the start to show the whole world that it was indeed true that the money came from an Arab prince, as claimed? It would have shut up his critics.

Oh, by the way, Najib allegedly received US\$681 million from the Saudi prince and later returned US\$620 million. So what happened to the remaining US\$61 million? Why does the AG not question what Najib did with that money?

From 1MDB sources?

So, did the money really come from a donor from Saudi Arabia or did it come from 1MDB?

According to WSJ Finance Editor Ken Brown in February, "Our reporting has shown for months now that the money did not come from the Saudis but it came via a bunch of companies and bank accounts related to 1MDB. ... we have lots of evidence to back that up."

The newspaper followed that up with a report that the US\$681 million was just a part of the deposits that went into Najib's accounts. From 2011 to 2013, more than US\$1 billion had already gone in. This was even more shocking.

The Attorney-General of Switzerland says investigations of 1MDB have revealed that about US\$4 billion appears to have been misappropriated from Malaysian state companies.

MP Tony Pua says we are very close to discovering "who are actually behind the entire 1MDB scam and who is the supposed donor".

He says all it takes is for Apandi to find out who the owners of shell companies involved in the money trail are - companies like Aabar Investments PJS Ltd which was set up in the British Virgin Islands, Blackstone Asia Real Estate Partners Limited, Tanore Finance Corporation (BVI) - and the truth will be revealed.

It has been openly said that Low Taek Jho a.k.a. Jho Low is one of the people behind the companies. Will the AG take that simple step to investigate this - for the sake of truth? I suppose if he did that, the shape of footballs might become hexahedronical.

Coining politicalese

I have written many articles on Najib and his policies over the last seven years. I have condemned the many times he's flip-flopped on his decisions and promises, especially his promise to repeal the Sedition Act. I have pointed out the times he actually lied. But nothing can measure up to his masterful performance in regard to the RM2.6 billion scandal.

He has managed to turn all attempts to expose or criticise the 1MDB and RM2.6 billion scandals into the politicalese of his own coining, which is that they are aimed at overthrowing a democratically elected government. When did asking for the truth amount to overthrowing the government in a democracy?

In April 2010, I wrote an article in MalaysianDigest.com entitled 'Does Najib Really Care for the Country?'

In it, I recounted a debate I had with a few friends who insisted that he didn't care. They said he was interested only in preserving his selfish interests.

I argued that "he must have some primordial connection to this land he was born in, some love for *tanah tumpah darahnya*. He must surely subscribe to the notion of this being tanah Melayu, the land of his forefathers and his people, the only such land in the world.

What's more, he has pedigree. He is the son of a former prime minister. Would any son of a country's former leader want to do worse than his father and be compared unfavourably? ... Would he not instead be concerned about his future legacy as prime minister, how he will be judged in history?"

Politician, not statesman

In answer to that, my friends pointed to the Perak coup of 2009 engineered by Najib. "How can you care for your country when you don't care for the rule of law and the country's institutions?" they said. "How can you rob the people of the choice they made as to whom they wanted for their state government?"

They proceeded to talk about the manipulation of institutions that included the police, the mass media, and the MACC. They talked about the corruption that continues to prevail and the lack of will to eradicate it.

They even talked about the Altantuya case and questioned if justice was being truly served. Why had the two police personnel sentenced to be hanged for the murder said nothing about who gave them the orders to kill the Mongolian? Why hadn't their motive for the murder - if they had any, to begin with - been established in court?

Of course, my friends were right. And now in the light of what's been happening lately, I have to say that legacy is something to take pride in if you are a statesman. But if you're just a mere politician, other things can often take priority. What's worse, the country can go to blazes, for all you care.

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