

No escape for Najib's 1MDB troupe
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COMMENT If I were given a role to play in a major blockbuster featuring the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, the last character I would choose to play is acting out the role of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

While he is 'secure' amidst his own men, Najib's position is now seen as precarious after yesterday's news that the United States Justice Department will act to [seize assets](#) linked to 1MDB.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, this would be the largest asset seizure in 240 years of US history. Najib is the key person helming the advisory committee of the government investment arm, besides also being both prime minister and finance minister at the time when the scandal took place.

He is also the man who has the power and authority to approve any form of major investment and transaction involving the 1MDB. Now, to think that his stepson, Rizal Aziz and his associate Low Taek Jho, will be named by the US federal agency is surely unflattering for Najib and the political party that he represents.

The world will be asking why the Malaysian government under Najib is unable to investigate the 1MDB scandal or find any fault with it when both the Singapore government and the US Justice Department have tracked the money trail and nail down some of the culprits involved in the money-laundering of what is allegedly RM52 billion.

To say the least, if Rizal cannot be located in the US after the names are released by the US Justice Department, the world will be asking why Najib is not surrendering his own stepson to face justice in the US. Would he be doing enough to see to it that his stepson receives justice, or would he be harbouring a fugitive?

If I were acting the role, I would be perspiring by now. The months ahead will be a tough time indeed for Najib, if his stepson is named as a wanted man.

We will be watching to see what happens with Rizal, whether he will be going into hiding in Malaysia or elsewhere. Assuming that Rizal is found guilty, and the Interpol flashes a red

card against him, and he is found hiding in Malaysia, why does the father then allow the country to harbour his stepson, an alleged fugitive?

These are the questions that the Malaysian public will be asking as well, as we stride into the next general election. Najib would also attract international censure for not doing anything to hand his stepson over to the US federal agency.

As predicted earlier, the noose is, in fact, tightening on Najib as federal agencies from six or seven countries around the world move in investigate the 1MDB scandal.

Tough decisions for Najib

Naturally, as a father, Najib would want to protect his stepson, but as the head of a country, does he have a choice?

Any slightest inkling that he has to harbour his stepson would immediately raise doubts within the ranks and files in his own political party. With the help of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his ex-Umno men, the news will hopefully be cascaded down to the grassroots soon, especially in the rural areas.

This is the dilemma that Najib would have to face, especially when the general election is looming round the corner. He has a major liability to take care. As time passes by, more people will begin to realise that the MDB scandal is indefensible. In the words of a former minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Wahid Omar, to the CNBC news network, from the onset the 1MDB model is unsustainable.

Many are thinking that Najib will use the National Security Council (NSC) Act but a bigger question has to be asked: Who will the military show loyalty to - a Act passed by Parliament without the consent of the Conference of Malay Rulers or the Yang di-Pertuan Agong? Would it be treason if the prime minister calls the shot without properly consulting the Agong? This is the question that I would like to ask our constitutional experts.

In Malaysia, by and large, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is still the chief commander of the armed forces, and it is to the Agong that our loyalty is due. Even The National Principles also states that loyalty is to both the Agong and the Country, never the prime minister or his wife. Hence, Najib may not really have the upper hand at the end of the day.

In fact, Najib faces a bigger challenge from within Umno, especially people who want Zahid Hamidi to take over the premiership before the next general election. After getting rid of Muhyiddin Yassin, there is no other challenger to Zahid.

Zahid has in fact been making popular statements. At a media function recently reported by Focus, Zahid urged enforcement agencies to “understand and appreciate the media’s role in exposing misdeeds”. It is likely that Zahid will attract more positive vibes than Najib who had clamped down on several media agencies, including *The Heat* which belongs to the same group as *Focus*.

Will there be a way out for Najib? We have to continue to watch the movie to see what happens in the finale. But for now, I would rather not take the role as Najib even if the producer were to pay me RM2.6 billion for playing the main character.

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