

'Najib's meeting with one of the world's oldest kleptocrats is troubling'

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MP SPEAKS The news today that President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe is on a working visit to Malaysia and will have a meeting with the Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is very troubling to Malaysians deeply concerned about democracy and human rights as well as integrity and good governance.

Will the Najib-Mugabe meeting be a get-together and note-exchanging between one the world's oldest surviving kleptocrats and the latest new kleptocrat on the block?

The term "kleptocrat" was only coined in the late 1990s to describe African dictators like Joseph Mobutu, Sani Abacha and Robert Mugabe plundering their own countries.

Wikipedia defines "kleptocracy" as "power, rule by thieves" and is applied to a government seen as having a particularly severe and systemic problem with officials or a ruling class (collectively, kleptocrats) taking advantage of corruption to extend their personal wealth and political power.

Typically this system involves the embezzlement of state funds at the expense of the wider population, sometimes without even the pretence of honest service.

Kleptocracies are generally associated with dictatorships, oligarchies, military juntas, or other forms of autocratic and nepotist governments in which external oversight is impossible or does not exist.

Many kleptocratic rulers secretly transfer public funds into hidden personal numbered bank accounts in foreign countries to provide for themselves if removed from power.

Mugabe has been described by a Zimbabwean MP as being responsible for Zimbabwe, once a promising middle income developing state, sliding into a kleptocracy and became the second poorest country in the world in a decade - one of the only countries to experience such a decline without being engaged in a war.

A tiny (no more than 2,000 people) criminal cabal became some of the wealthiest individuals in the world as Zimbabwe abandoned any pretext of being a law-abiding state and the theft of state and individual assets became the order of the day.

Malaysia is the latest nation to gain the infamous epithet of a "global kleptocracy" - after the US Department of Justice (DOJ) lawsuits on July 20 for the forfeiture of over US\$1 billion of assets in the US, UK and Switzerland from over US\$3 billion embezzlement, misappropriation and money-laundering of 1MDB funds, and after several countries like Singapore and Switzerland had taken action against banks, financial institutions and their staff in their countries for being implicated in the international conspiracy on money-laundering of 1MDB funds.

Is Najib trying to learn a few lessons from Mugabe how to be a global kleptocrat and still enjoy international immunity and impunity?

I do not think so as no patriotic Malaysians would feel proud at Malaysia being known as a "global kleptocracy".

This is why I call on the prime minister to seek parliamentary support through a motion when Parliament reconvenes on Oct 17 to refute the damning allegation that Malaysia has become a global kleptocracy.

Three days should be set aside for such a debate.

Dare Najib move such a motion in the first week of Parliament starting on Oct 17, or does he feel no shame, remorse or responsibility for the nation to be stained with the epithet of a "global kleptocracy"?

DAP and Pakatan Harapan MPs are open minded, and we are prepared to be convinced by Najib to refute the allegation that Malaysia is a "global kleptocracy" based on facts and figure on the 1MDB global scandal.

The ball is in Najib's court.