

Kit Siang draws parallels between Azam and Najib, fears kleptocracy relapse

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Iskandar Puteri MP Lim Kit Siang has drawn parallels between ex-prime minister Najib Abdul Razak and MACC chief commissioner Azam Baki.

He pinpointed Najib's conduct with regard to the 1MDB scandal and Azam's handling of his share ownership controversy, expressing concern that the country will relapse into kleptocracy.

He noted that Najib, in a "coming out speech" at a Makkal Sakthi Malaysia event yesterday, positioned himself as an honest man who did not want to promise the unachievable in the 14th general election and paid the price for it.

"Not a word on the 1MDB scandal, which was described by the US Attorney-General at the time, Jeff Sessions, at a global forum on asset recovery in December 2017 as 'kleptocracy at its worst' with the US Department of Justice working to provide justice to the victims of the 1MDB scandal.

"I find it surreal that while Najib is lamenting his plight for being honest, a US judge was setting a February date for the 1MDB corruption trial of a former Goldman Sachs banker, Roger Ng," Lim said in a statement.

Lim said the denial syndrome was likewise seen in Azam's response.

"Azam Baki, who vowed yesterday to fight allegations of misconduct, that he is 'still working and not on leave', when for over two months, neither the MACC nor Prime Minister Ismail Sabri, did anything over serious conflict-of-interest allegations against Azam.

"Just like Azam, Najib claimed that he could 'sleep soundly at night' and talk about 'morals and ethics' without mentioning the 1MDB scandal at all!

"This is what the country is confronted with, and will be the single biggest issue in the 15th general election – is Malaysia to relapse to a kleptocracy, the object of international scorn and ridicule, which the historic decision of the 14th General Election on May 9, 2018, had provided an opportunity to save Malaysia," Lim said.

Azam's ownership of millions of shares in two public listed firms in 2015 had raised questions on whether it was commensurate with his income as a public

servant and conflict of interest concerns.

Azam claimed the shares were bought in his name by his brother and they have since been transferred to the latter.

However, the explanation attracted the attention of the Securities Commission for possible misuse of trading accounts.

"The events of the last few days were a rehearsal of what to expect in the 15th General Election which the top Umno leadership wants to be held immediately," Lim said.

Lim said the nation had seen a decline in the last 50 years, losing out to Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam.

"Are we to decline further and see Indonesia and Philippines overtaking us in the coming decades?"

"We must buck up, stop our decline, and strive to be a world-class great nation. We must not relapse to be a kleptocracy, ending up as a kakistocracy and a failed state.

"This is what the 15th general election is all about – whether to relapse as a kleptocracy or take the initial steps to become a world-class great nation," he said.

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