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# Amangate: Will Najib clean up Nazri's mess?

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by KIM QUEK

**M**INISTER in Prime Minister's Department cum de facto law minister Nazri Abdul Aziz's attempt to disown responsibilities for his contradictory statements in parliament on grounds that he was only the reader – not the author – of those statements has brought serious concern to the soundness of the Barisan Nasional political leadership.

The senior minister was confronted with evidence of his son Nedim's family using a luxurious vehicle registered in Michael Chia's name, who together with Musa Aman (Sabah chief minister), were cleared by Nazri of corruption in parliament earlier.

Nazri had provided written answers in parliament that there was no corruption in the four-year-old scandal where Chia was alleged to have been arrested in Hong Kong for trying to smuggle S\$16 million of Musa's cash to Malaysia. Nazri also denied that Chia was arrested, or that he had cash with him. Nazri attributed these findings to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the Attorney General (AG).

Talking to reporters on Nov 1, Nazri explained that all his statements in parliament came from the MACC and AG, over whom he had no control. He was only the minister answering questions in parliament on issues that he was not involved in. As such, he sees no conflict of interest with Michael Chia. Sadly and shamefully, Nazri was in effect saying that he merely parroted what these government agencies told him, for which he disavowed any responsibility.

## Breach of Parliamentary Democracy

Nazri's stance immediately raises an alarm. If Nazri disclaims responsibility over his statements, then who is responsible to parliament for them?

Nazri is a cabinet minister in the prime minister's department, looking after parliamentary affairs, as well as de facto law minister.

So, if Nazri's disclaimer is justified, does it not mean that in addition to Nazri himself, the prime minister and the entire Barisan Nasional (BN) cabinet can also be freed from responsibility over possible false statements on the scandal made in parliament?

Doesn't this amount to the Barisan Nasional leadership abdicating wholesale its accountability to parliament, and by extension, betraying the trust upon which the people have elected the coalition to power?

This is certainly a serious breach of the principles of parliamentary democracy upon which this nation was founded, for which Prime Minister Najib Razak can no longer keep silent and must promptly stand up to make his stand to the nation. He must urgently clarify in parliament whether Nazri was authorized to make those statements and whether every minister is personally responsible for what he states in parliament.

And since the MACC comes under the prime minister's department while the AG is the Cabinet's chief legal adviser, both of whom are claimed by Nazri to be responsible for the statements he made in parliament, Najib must now give unequivocal answers to

many perplexing questions on the scandal, compounded by Nazri's contradicting versions of the story.

## Nazri's Contradictory Statements

To appreciate the seriousness of these contradictions perpetrated by Nazri in parliament, I will briefly recapitulate them as follows:

On Oct 11, answering MP Chua Tian Chan, Nazri stated that the AG decided that there was no corruption, based on MACC's investigations and reports. However, this assertion immediately clashes with MACC's own statement a few days earlier, when its deputy chief commissioner (operations) Shukri Abdul said on Oct 5 that investigation was still on-going, due to instruction by its review panel to get more evidence.

On Oct 18, answering MP Tan Kok Wai, Nazri changed his tune by saying that investigation was not carried out by MACC, but instead, by Hong Kong's Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC), which concluded that there was no corruption. No explanation was given as to why Nazri reversed his story.

On Oct 22, answering questions in the committee stage of the Budget 2013 debate in Dewan Rakyat, Nazri astounded all by denying that Michael Chia was ever arrested, neither did Chia possess the alleged cash, as he understood from MACC. No explanation was given as to why the BN government had kept its strange silence, while reports of Michael Chia's arrest with S\$16 million cash meant for Musa Aman swirled for the past four years.

It is important to note that while Nazri was dancing like a

yo-yo in parliament with his statements of exoneration for Chia and Musa, none of the investigating/law-enforcing bodies – ICAC, MACC or AG – ever uttered a word on the scandal (except for MACC's statement on Oct 5 that investigation was still in progress), least of all any declaration of the duo's innocence.

All we have is Nazri's words – words that are not corroborated or substantiated with even an iota of evidence, in addition to being self-contradictory and conflicting with MACC.

## PM Must Answer

Under the circumstances, Premier Najib must take responsibility for the bumbling minister in his department and step up to give categorical answers to the following questions in parliament to avert a total collapse of confidence in his leadership:

1. Is it true that ICAC has conveyed its findings of money laundering to MACC, including a money flow chart trailing the Sabah timber corruption money through a convoluted network to end up in Musa Aman's UBS AG account in Zurich, complete with details of various nominee accounts, payers and payees, deposit amounts, etc? (This money flow chart has been widely circulating in the Internet for some time).

2. Is it true that MACC has carried out an investigation of its own on Sabah timber corruption including a probe on Musa Aman and his brother Anifah Aman (Malaysia's foreign minister) since the Michael Chia incident in Hong Kong?

3. Is it true that neither ICAC nor MACC has ever exonerated Chia

and Musa of money laundering and corruption?

To avoid falling into the same quagmire as minister Nazri has, the premier is well advised to buttress his answers with sufficient and credible facts – the kind of evidence that will restore public confidence.

## The Latest Nazri-Chia Corruption Scandal

With regards to Nazri's latest refutation of any impropriety over his family's beneficial link to Michael Chia on grounds that his son is his son, with whom he has nothing to do, this is sheer child's talk.

Whether Nazri likes it or not, his son Nedim is his immediate family, and for any improper favour granted to Nedim by virtue of Nazri's position as a minister, the latter is deemed beneficiary and recipient of that improper favour.

Would Chia have given the half-million-ringingit Hummer SUV for use by Nedim's family, if not for the fact that Nazri is a senior minister capable of doing Chia a favour?

In this case, Nazri easily stands out as a prime corruption suspect, as he has already stuck his neck out in parliament where he recklessly cleared Chia (as well as his alleged master Musa Aman) of any wrongdoing. This is clearly a case with classical corruption ingredients, cut out for action by any corruption buster worth its salt in any democratic country.

However, in Malaysia, our MACC has already played deaf and dumb on the Chia-Musa scandal for the past four years. Will it also do a Chia-Musa on the latest Nazri-Chia corruption scandal this time around? - ES