

Explain Tajuddin Ramli 'bailout', TI-M chief tells Putrajaya
The Malaysian Insider
August 11, 2011
By Debra Chong



Transparency-International Malaysia president Datuk Paul Low urged the Najib administration to come clean on today's decision. — file pic

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 11 — Transparency-International Malaysia (TI-M) president Datuk Paul Low questioned the Najib administration's decision to settle all out-of-court suits between government-linked-companies (GLCs) and Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli, saying today Putrajaya has a duty to protect the public's interest.

He was responding to *The Malaysian Insider's* report earlier today, citing de facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz's directive to all GLCs, including Danaharta and Malaysian Airlines (MAS), to drop all claims against Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's poster boy for Bumiputera entrepreneurs as the Ministry of Finance (MOF) has agreed to settle the payment.

"When they say settle something, exactly what does it mean? Nobody knows how it's to be settled or how much, on what basis and justification? Is the government paying on behalf of the GLCs? Is it a bailout? Who are parties involved?"

"Who instructed Nazri? Was it the Finance Ministry, the Cabinet or the prime minister? We don't know," Low told *The Malaysian Insider* when contacted.

He reminded the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) federal government that it was accountable for spending taxpayers' money.

He said the government could not simply step into a legal dispute that involved a public-listed company, even if it had government ties; and added the government must show how the country and the public benefitted from such a decision.

"This arrangement does not reflect well on the government. In good governance, the buck stops at the CEO, or the board of directors. The government has to answer," he added.

The head of the local anti-graft watchdog urged Putrajaya to come clean on the decision, noting that it was a "test of good governance" for the ruling political coalition.

Opposition lawmakers said the out-of-court settlement demonstrate yet another example of political patronage.

The Najib administration's move to settle all outstanding claims against Tajuddin appears to be an attempt to wipe the slate clean in a financial saga that goes back decades to the height of Dr Mahathir's administration.

Tajuddin was a high flyer in the 1990s along with individuals, such as Tan Sri Halim Saad, but the 1997 Asian financial crisis saw most of them crashing to the ground.

Although Najib is expected to call a general election within the year, it has been reported that BN is short of funds to fight polls nationally, after committing its machinery to retain its two-thirds majority in the April 16 Sarawak state election.

The ruling coalition was said to have spent over RM500 million in the closer-than-expected race after party intelligence said that victory was only assured in 25 of the 71 state seats.

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