

Najib's handling of 1MDB an embarrassment, says PKR
The Malaysian Insider
May 13, 2015
By Eileen Ng

Datuk Seri Najib Razak's handling of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) saga has caused the country to suffer international "embarrassment", said PKR, following the latest uproar over the debt-laden company's land sale to Lembaga Tabung Haji.

Worse, PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar said the prime minister has also not shown any remorse.

"Najib from his handling of Tabung Haji is not showing signs of remorse. If you have something like this, which is not transparently disclosed, what you want is to be transparent, to be answerable, to ensure there is due process before we address the issue of debts. Those things are not taking place.

"I think it's an embarrassment Najib has caused us on the international scene," she said at the PKR headquarters in Petaling Jaya today.

Tabung Haji's purchase of the plot of land for RM188.5 million, or RM2,774 per sq ft, from 1MDB for the purpose of building a residential tower at the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) created an uproar among its depositors, some of whom withdrew their savings at its branch in Shah Alam last Thursday.

Opposition politicians were quick to note that the pilgrims' fund was paying far more per square foot (psf) than what 1MDB paid at RM64 psf, when it bought the land from the government, leading some to call the deal a "bailout" given 1MDB's massive debts.

On Saturday, the fund announced it was selling the land following public outcry over the transaction.

Tabung Haji chairman Datuk Seri Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim said Najib had advised him to dispose of the land so that the fund's reputation was not "tarnished" by its transaction with 1MDB, and in order to respect the "sensitivity" of depositors.

Describing the 1MDB saga as an economic disaster, Nurul said today the company was an embarrassment as it had also been internationally condemned over its burgeoning debts of RM42 billion.

The Pakatan Rakyat coalition, she said, has explained to international groups that there are voices in Malaysia who are against such abuses and are working hard to change the system.

Criticism has been mounting over the wholly owned Finance Ministry investment vehicle established in 2009.

Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah previously disclosed that Putrajaya had approved an RM950 million standby credit facility for 1MDB, of which RM600 million has been used.

Scrutiny grew more intense after whistleblower site Sarawak Report's exposes which piled pressure on Najib and prompted opposition politicians, former Umno leaders and anti-graft bodies to demand a thorough investigation into the fund.

The Public Accounts Committee will commence its probe into 1MDB next week, while the Auditor-General's report on the company is expected to be completed next month. – May 13, 2015.

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