

## **Nazri rubbishes Utusan report, denies Najib gave ministers ultimatum over 1MDB**

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**By V. Vasudevan and Eileen Ng**

There was no ultimatum given by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to members of the Cabinet last Friday to quit if they did not agree with him on plans to restructure 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a minister has said.

Culture and Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz told The Malaysian Insider that the prime minister practised inclusivity and wanted consensus from his Cabinet colleagues.

"PM said this at the meeting: 'if somehow, some of you feel uncomfortable with this, please hand in or write (your resignation), and I will understand.

"If you were there, you would not feel like it was an ultimatum," Nazri said.

Utusan Malaysia reported today Najib was said to have issued an ultimatum to his Cabinet last Friday, telling ministers to resign if they did not support him over the rehabilitation of debt-ridden state fund.

The Umno mouthpiece said, according to a source, none of the ministers declared he or she would not support the prime minister on 1MDB.

Najib was said to have issued the ultimatum soon after Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah finished laying out the road map for 1MDB's restructuring at the Cabinet meeting.

Nazri, also said that the Cabinet decided that Husni will be the official spokesman on any issues related to the state investment vehicle to ensure any news is reported uniformly and accurately.

Utusan had quoted a source as saying that Najib told the Cabinet members that those not with him over 1MDB should resign, "but not one person did so", the source said.

Utusan also noted that Najib's ultimatum followed the statement by Barisan Backbenchers Club chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Samad, who last Tuesday urged ministers who did not agree with the collective decision of the Cabinet on 1MDB, to resign.

Shahrir was expressing his agreement with Umno's Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who said the entire Cabinet was collectively responsible for 1MDB's controversies which have sapped public confidence over the government's handling and transparency over the Finance Ministry-owned firm with debts of RM42 billion.

Husni had said the company had entered into a binding agreement with Abu Dhabi's International Petroleum Investment Company (Ipic) and its subsidiary, Aabar Investments (Aabar), where Ipic would pay 1MDB US\$1 billion, on or before June 4, 2015.

The US\$1 billion payment would be used to repay a US\$975 million (RM3.5 billion) loan, in advance of its due date, to a syndicate of international bank lenders, Husni had said.

Amid negative reactions that the money from the Abu Dhabi companies would see 1MDB incur more debt, the firm's president and group executive director Arul Kanda Kandasamy issued a statement denying that the US\$1 billion was a loan and that it was money Ipic was returning based on an earlier agreement. – June 1, 2015

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