

Going on leave best of 3 options for Najib, says Musa Hitam
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Embattled Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has three options to consider for his immediate future as he wards off allegations that US\$700 million (RM2.67 billion) was transferred into his personal bank accounts, Tun Musa Hitam told The Malaysian Insider.

The former deputy prime minister said Najib could: 1) remain in office and fight the allegations, 2) resign as prime minister and, 3) go on leave pending the investigations by a special government task force.

On a personal note, Musa said he would prefer it if Najib took the third option to allow for an open and transparent investigation.

Speaking exclusively to The Malaysian Insider yesterday, the 81-year Musa said he could no longer sit quietly as the issue gripped the nation.

"I have been under pressure from friends and foes to offer my views although I am out politics," said Musa who was deputy prime minister from 1981 to 1986 to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Najib's harshest critic.

Explaining why he preferred Najib to take the third option, Musa said this would give investigators the "space psychologically, politically and legally for them to find the truth".

He said Najib could resign and this would be the best "treat" the country would have and give way to new leader in Umno.

"But I humbly suggest that Najib take leave of absence for a certain length of period to facilitate the non-partisan investigation that is under way," he said.

"To me, this (going on leave) is the best option that will show Najib's leadership, character and personality in line with the principles of parliamentary democracy," he added.

Musa said he was making the suggestion in Ramadan and also was invoking the good name of his mentor, Tun Abdul Razak, who had taken the nation to where it was now.

The late Razak, the nation's second prime minister, is also Najib's father.

"He (Razak) cared for the people and the nation," said Musa, almost in tears.

Musa said should Najib go on leave, it should not be construed as a sign of weakness. "As for me, I hold dear to the legal maxim that one is innocent until proven guilty and this also applies to Najib."

Commenting on Umno, Musa, who was a former deputy president, said the party was in denial mode over its leadership problem.

"There is a very big problem in Umno and this affects the people because Najib was legally and constitutionally elected," he said, adding that the Umno president is always the prime minister of the country.

Musa said Umno must recognise the problem and find ways and means to overcome it.

"They must find an alternative and this does not mean getting the president out but looking at the options before them.

"But this must be done rationally, calmly and in the interest of the country and the people."

Musa said all the implications of the options must be studied before a decision was made.

"This is the way I will do it but unfortunately I am not there."

Musa also said that he did not believe in the declaration of support for a leader in power.

"Those who pledge their support will be first to scoot off when their leader is in trouble," he said recounting his own experience in the party.

Last Friday, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported that up to US\$700 million was transferred into Najib's personal bank accounts in AmPrivate Bank in Kuala Lumpur between 2013 and 2015.

The WSJ reported that US\$681 million (RM2.6 billion) originating from Tanore Finance, a company in the British Virgin Islands, was deposited into Najib's accounts in two transactions on March 21 and 25 in 2013, ahead of the general election in May.

It also uploaded documents it used in its report which showed instructions for telegraphic transfers and charts showing the money trail.

The task force confirmed yesterday that Najib had accounts at AmBank, but added that the two accounts were closed before the business daily broke the story last Friday.

The task force, in a statement yesterday, had also said one of the accounts had been closed on August 30, 2013.

Another sum of US\$11.1 million (RM42 million) originating from Finance Ministry-owned SRC International Sdn Bhd was moved in three tranches between

December 2014 and February this year.

The second account was closed on March 9 this year, the task force said in the same statement.

The task force on Tuesday froze six accounts in relation to its investigation.

Najib denied taking money for personal gain, but has not commented directly on the fund transfers to his accounts. Bank Negara and AmBank have also not responded to the allegations.

The task force yesterday also said the documents being investigated had been provided by the group itself and were not the ones the WSJ had published.

The statement was signed by the four members of the task force: Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail, Bank Negara governor Tan Sri Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar and Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission chief commissioner Tan Sri Abu Kassim Mohamed. – July 10, 2015.

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