

**Difficult for Najib to survive 1MDB scandal even if cleared, says Forbes**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will find it difficult to survive the latest scandal involving debt-ridden state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) whether or not it is proven that US\$700 million (RM2.67 billion) did go into his personal account, business magazine Forbes said.

An opinion piece "Can Najib Razak Survive 1MDB Scandal?" said even if the allegations turned out to be untrue, they had come at a difficult time for Najib.

This was due to other factors, such as Umno's internal turmoil as it grappled with the reality that it no longer had an "automatic right" to win every election, causing the party to become unsure if Najib was the right person to lead the lynchpin party of the ruling coalition in a more competitive political environment.

Forbes also noted that Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail had confirmed receiving documents linking Najib to 1MDB and was reported to have felt there was potential for it to lead to criminal charges being filed if the allegations were accurate.

"Najib Razak, Malaysia's prime minister since 2009, is facing the greatest challenge of his leadership – and even the risk of criminal charges," the article said.

"Malaysia is a place where reputation matters enormously and where bad press sticks.

"Even if the Attorney-General does not feel the evidence is strong enough to prosecute, there is a very strong sense that Najib has been weakened regardless," the Forbes opinion piece by finance writer Chris Wright said.

Besides the 1MDB scandal, Najib was also weakened by attacks from former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had turned against him and was calling for his resignation over his handling of the strategic investment firms, Forbes noted.

All this was taking place at a time when Malaysia, a net exporter of commodities, was struggling with falling commodity prices, the article added.

Najib, who is also finance minister, is chairman of 1MDB's advisory board. He has long been criticised over the fund's RM42 billion debts and opaque dealings, but latest allegations have hit a personal spot as money was alleged to have been transferred to his personal bank accounts in 2013, ahead of the 13th general elections in May that year.

Last Thursday, Wall Street Journal and UK-based website Sarawak Report made the revelation that up to US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) was allegedly transferred to two bank accounts under Najib's name with AmBank in 2013.

The prime minister, however, has denied ever taking any funds from 1MDB for personal gain and instead pinned the blame for the latest report on Dr Mahathir whom he also accused of working with foreign agents against his administration.

However, opposition politicians have taken Najib to task over his "ambiguous denial", while WSJ is standing by its story, saying its report was based on solid documentation proof.

This allegation follows an earlier one, reported by WSJ also, that 1MDB had indirectly funded part of Najib's general election campaign in 2013 through an overpriced purchase of assets from the Genting Group. – July 6, 2015.

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