

Do the right thing, go on leave, Najib told
The Malaysian Insider
July 9, 2015

Datuk Seri Najib Razak should take the honourable route and vacate his post as prime minister, pending a probe into claims that US\$700 million were channelled into his personal accounts, Centre for a Better Tomorrow (Cenbet) said today.

Joining the growing calls urging Najib to go on leave, the pro-moderation group said the prime minister should not be afraid of such a move, as it was part of good governance and not an admission of guilt.

"Given the unprecedented magnitude of allegations in The Wall Street Journal about US\$700 million being transferred into the prime minister's personal bank account, Datuk Seri Najib Razak should consider taking leave, pending the completion of the probe into this.

"This is the only right and honourable thing to do so that investigators will be seen truly free and independent to get to the bottom of this damning allegation," Cenbet said in a statement.

The group is headed by co-chairmen and lawyers Gan Ping Sieu and Lim Chee Wee.

Cenbet said that by vacating his post temporarily, Najib would be able to focus on tackling the controversy, and would not be held back by government duties.

But the group added that Najib should also clear his name first, as the "court of public opinion can be vicious".

Cenbet said Najib should instruct AmBank to set the record straight on the alleged transactions involving his account, order Bank Negara Malaysia to state whether it was aware of the alleged transaction, and have 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and AmBank sue WSJ for defamation.

The group said once Najib was cleared of all wrongdoing, he could return to office "with his head held much higher than when he took leave".

"He would have set a good example in holding public office and kept a higher moral standing in the public's eye. That will certainly be in the best interest of the nation," it said.

The group added it was concerned that the attorney-general and inspector-general of police (IGP) seemed more interested in going after those who leaked the confidential documents, rather than verifying their authenticity.

"This 'killing the messenger' attitude does not help restore confidence in public institutions and could make the current investigation appear compromised," said Cenbet.

WSJ had reported on July 2 that US\$700 million (RM2.67 billion) was moved among government agencies, banks and entities linked to 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) before finally ending up in Najib's personal accounts in five separate deposits.

Najib has so far denied the allegations, saying they were a political ploy engineered by his opponents, including former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The New York-based publication insists, however, that its investigation was based on solid documentation, and on Tuesday uploaded documents on the Internet to support its report.

The government special task force said in a statement on Tuesday that six bank accounts connected to the allegations had been frozen.

The task force also seized documents linked to 17 accounts at two banks for further investigation.

The freeze and seizures were related to the non-compliance of Bank Negara rules by the said banks.

Many, including opposition politicians, civil society leaders and the public, have called on Najib to go on leave pending investigations. Retired attorney-general Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman, however, said there was no legal requirement compelling the prime minister to do so. – July 9, 2015.

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