

Nazir Razak expresses concern over ringgit slide
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CIMB Group chairman Datuk Seri Nazir Razak today added to the chorus of voices expressing concerns over the ringgit's free fall, which has breached the RM4 mark against the US dollar.

In a posting on photo sharing site Instagram, he posted a picture with the headline "FBM KLCI approaches 1,600 level, ringgit breaches 4 vs USD".

"Terrible time to be distracted by politics and so much negative media coverage. Our best, most credible and crisis experienced finance team needs to be put in front of markets urgently," wrote Nazir, who is also the prime minister's brother.

The ringgit is Asia's worst performing currency in the past year, and it breached the RM4 mark yesterday morning.

The ringgit registered 4.0075 to the US dollar in early trade, the weakest level since September 1998, as compared with the strongest point of the ringgit in July 27, 2011 at 2.939 against the greenback.

Many have attributed the ringgit's poor performance to the worsening global outlook, China's surprise devaluation of the yuan, plunging commodity prices and the current political scandals linked to Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Najib is currently facing intense scrutiny over the US\$700 million (RM2.6 billion) "donation" from a Middle Eastern country into his personal accounts while at the same time, his brainchild, state investment firm 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) is facing multiple probes into alleged financial irregularities.

The country is also suffering from a perception of interference when Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail was abruptly replaced as Attorney-General while the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) offices were raided and its officers were detained for questioning by the police over alleged leak of information related to 1MDB.

At the same time, Parliament's bipartisan Public Accounts Committee (PAC) probe into 1MDB hit a snag following the Cabinet reshuffle when four of its members, including its chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan were elevated to ministerial positions.

PAC was to review an inspection of 1MDB's accounts by the auditor-general who had submitted an interim report on its findings, as well as to question the company's current and former top executives.

This did not materialise because of changes to the committee, which led to calls by the opposition and some Umno members for the Cabinet to quickly appoint a new PAC chairman instead of waiting until the next parliamentary sitting.

However, Putrajaya is adamant that PAC can only continue its hearings when Parliament reconvenes on October 19.

Malaysians had been dismayed with the continued plunge of the ringgit and despite suggestions from some quarters, including former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to peg the currency, but Putrajaya said it had no plans to do so.

AirAsia group chief executive officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes yesterday told Putrajaya to focus on resolving the ringgit's free fall instead of being preoccupied with other matters such as restricting social media. – August 13, 2015.

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