

Time to Sail Forward

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KUALA LUMPUR, (Bernama) -- It seems that the relentless attacks on the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, especially on his alleged connection to 1Malaysia Development Bhd's (1MDB) missing funds has suddenly hit a few potholes.

In its 106-page report that was tabled at the Dewan Rakyat on April 7, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) said, among others, that its investigation found no evidence of any involvement by the Prime Minister into the management of 1MDB, nor of a transfer of funds from 1MDB to Najib's personal account.

The bi-partisan and collective committee concluded that all of the state-owned company's funds have been accounted for but that the financing and performance of 1MDB was "unsatisfactory".

The PAC thus called for a thorough investigation into the management of 1MDB, citing that "its directors failed to take appropriate action and weren't proactive in monitoring the company's management".

The PAC further called for a full investigation into the lapses of former 1MDB chief executive Datuk Shahrol Halmi, and other managers to ascertain the causes for the fund's poor performance.

The PAC report prompted the Board of Directors of 1MDB to offer their resignation en bloc; and we should accept their resignation without exempting them from any wrongdoings or negligence should further investigation reveal such facts.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar had announced on April 14 that the police is setting up a special task force to study the findings of the PAC report and will act accordingly, including seeking the assistance of its former CEO to facilitate investigations and to produce evidence on those who should be held accountable.

The PAC report further strengthened the investigation report that was submitted to the Attorney General's Chambers, which stated that the Prime Minister was not involved with 1MDB's management and funds and prompted the AG Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi to announce the same conclusion.

It is also the latest vindication clearing Najib of any involvement in 1MDB and should be accepted as clear evidence as such - since the members of the PAC consists of Members of Parliament from both Barisan Nasional and the opposition.

Recently, the United Kingdom-based The Guardian and Malaysian media reported Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir as saying that the RM2.6 billion transferred into the Malaysian Prime Minister's personal bank account was a no-strings-attached gesture.

"It is a genuine donation with nothing expected in return. And we are also fully aware that the Attorney-General of Malaysia has thoroughly investigated the matter and found no wrongdoing. So, as far as we are concerned, the matter is closed," Adel al-Jubeir was quoted as saying.

The PAC report and the Saudi Foreign Minister's statement prove that allegations that the RM2.6 billion was part of 1MDB's funds are untrue.

We should therefore accept the dictum that a person "should be deemed innocent unless proven guilty" on the gravity of the evidence shown. This is also the case in the management and running of this country, vis-a-vis majority rule, be it in Parliament, Barisan Nasional or UMNO. Therefore if Najib continues to receive the support of the majority of the House, then his leadership should not come into question or be doubted again.

The right thing to do is to practice fairness in all matters and not to practice double-standards where certain issues or people are concerned, just for the purpose of hidden motives. The onus on the burden of proof is on the accuser to provide unchallenged evidence that a crime or wrongdoing has been committed and not the other way around.

The new 1MDB CEO Arul Kanda Kandasamy, who was appointed in January 2015, took the task to embark upon a debt restructuring and rationalising exercise to stabilise the company. The plans were put in place and approved by the Cabinet in June 2015. 1MDB had also requested six months for the exercise to be completed. So far, the rationalisation and restructuring plans have been successful and have been well received, and this has put 1MDB in good standing.

The focus now should be on strengthening 1MDB and ensuring that it will be able to service its debts with no loss to the taxpayers. Any alleged wrongdoing will need to be addressed in a separate exercise through investigation and proper evidence findings, which is presently being done.

The allegations as to the origins of the funds in the Prime Minister's personal account has now been proven not to come from 1MDB. With this finding it is now time for Malaysians to sail forward and end the circus of accusations. The mutineers have failed in their attempt to force the Captain to walk the plank, and have now weakened. All shipmen should therefore unite behind the Captain to steady the ship rather than letting it sink.

We should instead focus on ensuring the continued survival, growth and prosperity of our nation and the rakyat and to support the present leadership.

Since the storm is abating and the seas calmer, there should not be a mutiny against the Captain. As the Captain, Najib should be allowed to run the country; and thereafter for us to allow the rakyat to judge his performance in the next general election. This is the practice of true democracy.

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