

Donation or Corruption?

News:

On the 29th of July 2015, the Prime Minister of Malaysia announced a new cabinet reshuffle. As expected, the Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyidin Yassin is nowhere to be seen in the new cabinet line up. For the past few months, the National Coalition government, specifically the Prime Minister, have been the target of much criticism in his handling of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) crisis. Najib established 1MDB in 2009 with the visionary aim of facilitating investment and trade with the Middle East, and of developing a new financial district in Kuala Lumpur. Najib chairs the 1MDB advisory board and also heads the Ministry of Finance, which fully owns the company. Lately, the company suffered a severe debt crisis and Najib was directly blamed for the chaos. Things were made worse when the Wall Street Journal exposed that a huge amount of money, amounting to RM2.6 billion had been transferred, allegedly from 1MDB into Najib's personal bank account. Najib never denied the allegation. In an unexpected turn of events, Najib revamped the cabinet by sacking one of his most vocal criticizer, Muhyidin. Cabinet members who were on Muhyidin's side were also sidelined in the new cabinet line up. Worse, some members of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) who were given the task to investigate the 1MDB scandal are included in the new cabinet line up! Right after the reshuffle, Najib executed several political acts that turned the table around. Most importantly, the RM2.6 billion that allegedly went into his personal account was declared to be a donation and was not obtained from 1MDB. The 1MDB scandal was suddenly undermined and the issue is no longer about the scandal but about the people responsible for exposing the scandal!

Comment:

It is a common practice for political parties and individual ministers in a democratic system to receive what is perceived as 'donations' from various bodies and individuals. The public is most of the time unaware of the whereabouts, recipients and accounting of these monies. It is here that the line between 'donation' and 'bribery' or 'corruption' is blurred. Bribery/corruption is a cursed practice and this can be evidenced from the Quran and hadith of Rasulullah (saw).

Allah (swt) said, «وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْخِلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِيَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ» **“And eat up not one another's property unjustly, nor give bribery to the rulers that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully.”** [TMQ al-Baqarah: 188]

In a hadith, Abdullah bin Amr said, «لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّاشِيَّ وَالْمُرْتَشِيَّ» **“The Messenger of Allah (saw) cursed the one who bribes and the one who takes a bribe.”** (Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and Ahmad).

In another hadith, Abu Hurairah said, «لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّاشِيَّ وَالْمُرْتَشِيَّ فِي الْحُكْمِ» **“The Messenger of Allah cursed the bribe giver and the recipient in governance.”** (Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud).

The curse of Allah and the Messenger dawns upon the giver of bribes, the receiver bribes and those acting as mediators whether they are rulers, politicians, judges, civil servants, directors, trustees, employees, or anyone at any level. The scope of bribery and corruption is also clearly defined in Islam. This is evidenced by a hadith reported by Abu Humaid ibn Sa`d As-Sa`idi (May Allah be pleased with him).

استعمل النبي رجلاً من الأزد يقال له ابن اللتبية على الصدقة، فلما قدم قال: هذا لكم، وهذا أهدي إلي، فقام رسول الله ﷺ على المنبر، فحمد الله وأثنى عليه، ثم قال: «أما بعد فإني أستعمل الرجل منكم على العمل مما ولاني الله، فإيتني فيقول: هذا لكم، وهذا هدية أهديت إلي، أفلا جلس في بيت أبيه وأمه حتى تأتيه هديته إن كان صادقاً، والله لا يأخذ أحد منكم شيئاً بغير حقه إلا لقي الله تعالى، يحمله يوم القيامة...» ثم رفع يديه حتى روي بياض إبطيه فقال: «اللهم هل بلغت» ثلاثاً. (متفق عليه).

The Prophet employed a man from the tribe of Al-Azd named Ibn Al-Lutabiyah to collect the Zakah. When he returned (to the Prophet with the collections), he said: "This is for you while this (other wealth) is a gift presented to me. (So, it is mine)." So the Messenger of Allah stood on the pulpit, praised Allah, extolled Him and then he said, "Why does an official whom I send (in a mission) say: 'This is for you and this has been presented to me as gift?' Why did he not stay in the house of his father and mother to see whether gifts will be given to him or not? By (Allah) in Whose Hand is the life of Muhammad, if any one of you takes anything (wrongfully,) he will bring it on the Day of Resurrection, carrying it on his neck...". Then he raised his hands till we could see the whiteness of his armpits and repeated twice, "O Allah! Have I conveyed (Your Commandments)?" (Muslim)

Any monies received by a person which carry the burden of favour are clearly haram, what more if they are received by a person of political stance, be it in his name or his Party's name. In this case of RM2.6 billion 'donation', would anyone in the right mind donate such a huge sum of money without any form of compensation to a person of no political stance? There are just too many questions... May Allah protect us all from the curse of corruption!

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