

MEDIA STATEMENT

IDEAS: POLITICAL FINANCING ACT URGENTLY NEEDED TO CLARIFY WHAT CONSTITUTES POLITICAL DONATIONS

Kuala Lumpur, 22 July 2021: Member of Parliament (MP) Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman today has claimed trial over the charge of misappropriating RM1 million belonging to his former party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM). Syed Saddiq's charge follows the Court of Appeal's decision to overturn the RM2 million corruption conviction against former federal territories minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor. The Court ruled that the RM2 million was a political donation to UMNO for two by-elections in 2016.

IDEAS believes that both cases are not the only legal trials involving political fund misappropriation. Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Tun Abdul Razak has also been brought to trial due to a huge amount of donation from the Middle East which was wired to his personal account. The former Prime Minister alleged that the donation was given as a means to sustain Malaysia as a model of Islamic governance and peaceful multicultural nation. The saga of fund misappropriation trials indicate the legal *lacunae* to regulate political funding in Malaysia.

"These two cases involving politicians from different parties are perfect examples of why our political financing system needs an immediate and urgent overhaul. Currently, political financing is not regulated and the campaign spending limits stated in the Election Offences Act are unrealistically low. As long as the system remains unregulated, more cases like Syed Saddiq's and Tengku Adnan's will come to light and there will continue to be a lack of clarity as to what constitutes political donations," comments Tricia Yeoh, CEO of IDEAS.

"We are aware that a Political Financing Bill has been drafted, and we call on the government to provide clarity over the status of the Bill. Despite being consulted on many different occasions, civil society remains in the dark about the contents of this draft. At IDEAS, we propose that any legislation that will be enacted must contain these following principles: an appropriate public funding mechanism for political parties, transparency in both donations and spending, prohibition of government-linked companies (GLCs) from making political donations and finally, transparency of large assets and businesses owned by political parties," adds Yeoh.

"When there is no clarity and transparency in the system, political actors would act with discretion in accumulating and disbursing political funds. In the long term, there will be a trust deficit to our politicians and political system, as well as erosion to the law enforcement and justice system. No doubt, our democracy suffers in the long run. We urge the government to seriously consider restarting the conversation on the importance of transparency in political financing and IDEAS is willing to facilitate this process.

We would like to stress that a Political Financing Act will benefit all political parties across the divide, as parties would be treated equally and fairly by an independent Comptroller, to whom financial disclosures will be made. Streamlining political financing laws in the country will lead to improved outcomes and reduce political corruption in the long run,” concludes Yeoh.

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About IDEAS

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) is a nonprofit research institute, dedicated to promoting solutions to public policy challenges, focussing on three overarching missions – advancing a competitive economy, ensuring trust in institutions and promoting an inclusive Malaysia. IDEAS is Malaysia’s first independent think tank, free of personal interests and partisan influences. For more information, visit www.ideas.org.my.

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KENYATAAN MEDIA

IDEAS: AKTA PENDANAAN POLITIK DIPERLUKAN SEGERA UNTUK MEMPERINCIKAN SUMBANGAN POLITIK

Kuala Lumpur, 22 Julai 2021: Ahli Parlimen, YB Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman pada hari ini meminta untuk dibicarakan atas tuduhan menyalahgunakan wang berjumlah RM1 juta milik bekas partinya, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM). Pendakwaan terhadap Syed Saddiq ini disusuli selepas keputusan Mahkamah Rayuan untuk mengubah sabitan rasuah RM2 juta terhadap YB Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor, mantan Menteri Wilayah Persekutuan. Mahkamah telah memutuskan bahawa wang berjumlah RM2 juta tersebut merupakan sumbangan politik kepada UMNO untuk dua pilihan raya kecil pada tahun 2016.

IDEAS percaya masih terdapat perbincangan-perbincangan lain yang melibatkan penyalahgunaan dana politik. Mantan Perdana Menteri Malaysia, Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Tun Abdul Razak telah dibicarakan kerana sejumlah besar wang sumbangan dari Timur Tengah dimasukkan ke dalam akaun peribadinya. Beliau menjelaskan bahawa sumbangan tersebut bertujuan untuk mengekalkan Malaysia sebagai satu model tadbir urus Islamik serta kemajmukan budaya secara aman damai. Perbincangan penyalahgunaan dana memberikan isyarat bahawa terdapat kelompongan perundangan dalam mengawal selia pendanaan politik di Malaysia.

“Dua kes yang melibatkan ahli politik daripada parti yang berbeza ini merupakan contoh terbaik untuk menunjukkan sistem pendanaan politik Malaysia memerlukan satu rombakan segera dan menyeluruh. Ketika ini, pendanaan politik tidak dikawal selia malah, had perbelanjaan kempen yang dinyatakan di dalam Akta Kesalahan Pilihan Raya adalah sangat rendah. Selagi sistem ini kekal tidak dikawal selia, lebih banyak kes seperti kes Syed Saddiq dan Tengku Adnan akan muncul. Kekaburan tentang pengertian sumbangan politik juga akan berterusan,” ulas Tricia Yeoh, Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif IDEAS.

“Kami maklum bahawa satu Rang Undang-undang Pendanaan Politik telah dirangka dan kami menyeru pihak kerajaan untuk memberikan penjelasan tentang status rang undang-undang tersebut. Walaupun telah dibawa berunding beberapa kali, organisasi masyarakat sivil masih belum mengetahui isi kandungan rang undang-undang tersebut. IDEAS menyarankan rang undang-undang yang ingin dilaksanakan untuk mengandungi prinsip-prinsip berikut: satu mekanisme pendanaan awam yang bersesuaian untuk parti politik, ketelusan dalam sumbangan dan perbelanjaan, larangan terhadap syarikat berkaitan kerajaan (GLC) daripada membuat sumbangan politik dan yang terakhir, ketelusan aset dan perniagaan yang dimiliki oleh parti-parti politik,” tambah Yeoh.

“Apabila tiada ketelusan dalam sesuatu sistem, ahli politik akan sesuka hati bertindak dalam mengumpul dan membelanja dana politik. Ini akan mengakibatkan defisit kepercayaan terhadap ahli dan sistem politik kita untuk jangka masa panjang, termasuk akan berlaku hakisan keyakinan rakyat terhadap sistem penguatkuasaan undang-undang serta kehakiman. Demokrasi kita pasti akan merudum dalam jangka panjang. Kami menggesa pihak kerajaan agar mempertimbang untuk memulakan kembali dialog tentang kepentingan ketelusan dalam pendanaan politik dan IDEAS sedia untuk membantu proses ini.

Kami ingin menekankan bahawa satu Akta Pendanaan Politik akan memberikan manfaat kepada semua parti politik, kerana mereka akan diberikan layanan adil dan sama rata oleh satu pengawal selia bebas. Parti-parti politik juga akan memberikan pernyataan kewangan mereka kepada pengawal selia tersebut. Memperkemaskan undang-undang pendanaan politik negara akan meningkatkan hasil serta mengurangkan rasuah politik untuk jangka masa panjang,” simpul Yeoh.

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Tentang IDEAS

Institut Demokrasi dan Hal Ehwal Ekonomi (IDEAS) merupakan sebuah institut penyelidikan bukan berasaskan keuntungan, mengkhususkan kepada mempromosikan penyelesaian terhadap cabaran dasar awam berdasarkan kepada prinsip kedaulatan undang-undang, kerajaan terhad, pasaran bebas, dan kebebasan individu. IDEAS merupakan badan pemikir bebas pertama Malaysia, tanpa kepentingan peribadi serta pengaruh berpihak. Untuk maklumat lanjut, lawati www.ideas.org.my.

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