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CM: Better not to give or accept gifts

A. Hafiz Yatim

MALACCA, Sun. - To give or not to give, to accept or not to accept. If that is the question, said Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Abu Zahar Isnin, and you are uncertain, it is better not to give or accept gifts.

The Federal Government, waging a battle against corruption among officials' ranks, is to spell out the types of gifts politicians and top officials can keep.

To ensure that gifts received by politicians would not be misconstrued as bribery attempts, the guidelines as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday would require recipients to surrender the gifts to the Finance Ministry.

The guidelines are to help the givers of the gifts, souvenirs or tokens realise what they could and could not give.

Abu Zahar, acting on the decision of the ruling Barisan Nasional, today ordered all senior State Government officials, the various State committee chairmen and Assemblymen not to accept tokens of appreciation or souvenirs if they are found to be at odds with the guidelines.

He said the guidelines drawn up by the Barisan Nasional would be adopted by the Government and would help guide the corporate sector and Government agencies which intend to award souvenirs or gifts to such people.

"However, the onus will still be on the recipients whether to accept it or not as the parties bearing the gifts may not know that their token of appreciation is against the law.

"Therefore, I would direct all senior State Government officials, State Committee chairmen and Assemblymen not to accept gifts, if they suspect that they do not correspond to the guidelines," he said.

Abu Zahar was speaking to reporters after launching the Wanita Umno tilawah Al Quran and berzanji event held at Dewan Taming Sari of the Malacca Municipal Council building.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in chairing the BN meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre said gifts and souvenirs received by BN politicians and Government servants should be sent to the Finance Ministry to be valued.

"These souvenirs are meant only as tokens, but sometimes they cost thousands (of ringgit).

"As such, we will decide on the souvenirs that can be accepted by the recipients and those that they should send to the Finance Ministry," he had said.

Abu Zahar added Malacca welcomed the guidelines as it would help prevent corrupt practices in accepting gifts which could be said to be of high value.

"The move to come-up with a guideline would help the corporate sector to select the right kind of gifts to be given to politicians and senior government officials."

On a standard Syariah law, the Chief Minister said that the State also welcomed the move made by the Government in having a uniform guideline in Syariah laws as religious scholars being humans who draw up the law may make mistakes also.

"Therefore, by having a standard Syariah law such errors could be minimised," he said adding he would comply with the freeze order made by Dr Mahathir to facilitate a study done by the Prime Minister's Department.

Earlier, Abu Zahar called upon Muslims to prepare a strategy to improve

the image of Islam in the eyes of the world.  
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