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Details of graft cases only after probes are finished

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THE Anti-Corruption Agency cannot reveal details or information in cases involving malpractice or corruption until investigations are completed and the suspects charged in court.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz said it would be grossly unfair to the persons being investigated if the charges or allegations against them had no basis.

"Those being questioned or investigated face mental torture and to announce their names and the alleged offences will only cause them further injury," he told the Dewan Rakyat.

Replying to points raised during the debate on allocations for the Prime Minister's Department, Parliament, the Audit Department and the ACA, he said the investigations on former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib and former Perwaja Steel boss Tan Sri Eric Chia were still going on. Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang had wanted to know why there was no information on the investigations involving Muhammad and Chia.

Lim (DAP-Tanjung) also wanted to know details of the six Ministers, two Deputy Ministers, one Parliamentary Secretary and eight State Executive Councillors who were said to have been questioned by the ACA on cases involving malpractice and corruption. Nazri said investigations on the above cases were also not completed and therefore it was too early to state whether they would be prosecuted.

To another point raised by Lim, Nazri said the ACA had to lodge a police report regarding a New Straits Times report which stated that one of its prosecuting officers was arrested for demanding RM1 million from a former army officer being investigated by the ACA for bribery connected to the purchase of arms, because the report was false.

The ACA admitted that it had arrested one of its own officers for abusing his position but claimed this was not related to the case as reported in the newspaper.

"We have no intention of putting fear into reporters or the newspapers they represent.

"We welcome factual reports which would assist us in our bid to wipe out corruption," he said.

Nazri assured the House that the ACA would not compromise on corruption. The agency did not practise double standards as alleged by some MPs.

He said the ACA did not differentiate between cases involving politicians or senior government officers. It treated all cases in the same manner.

On Information Technology, Nazri said the fact that the IT campaign was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad showed the Government's seriousness in promoting IT.

He said he agreed with Lim that the Parliament Homepage facilities needed upgrading. Steps were being taken, he said.

"We want the Parliament homepage to be the best and to be an example of IT advancement," he said.

Lim said the Parliament Homepage set up in May last year was not updated or interactive and only provided historic information, making the website a museum piece.

Since May last year major issues like the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the 1997 Budget, the historic cyber laws and recently the national haze disaster were debated in Parliament.

"But none of these appeared on the parliamentary website.

"Other Parliaments provide the latest information like notices of the Day, parliamentary answers, daily parliamentary proceedings and Government Bills through the Hansard on their websites.

"This actually can be done easily and simply because all parliamentary material and Bills are now prepared in electronic form and therefore no extra work is needed to upload them to the website."

Lim said the Prime Minister recently launched the national IT awareness campaign and Parliament as the highest political and legislative chamber should play the leadership role.

However, he said the parliamentary homepage is most shameful.

It shows Parliament has still to get the necessary mindset without which no information society can be achieved.

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