

Opposition cannot deny graft, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: Opposition parties, including PAS, cannot deny being involved in corrupt practices, especially when trying to win votes. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Making promises that if Malays vote for them, they will go to heaven is another form of bribery called moral corruption," he said, in response to questions from the press on claims by the Opposition that the government practises corruption.

Earlier, when opening a seminar 'on *Integrity in Business: The Way Forward* organised by the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA), Mahathir said in a democratic system, the people are given the power and right to vote and choose their representatives, which can also encourage corruption.

This will result in the candidate chosen being not good enough to lead.

"Instead, the people elect a candidate who gives or promises to give something. The leaders elected will be those involved in corruption, and not those capable of leading or ruling a state or country," he said.

At the press conference, the prime minister, asked for his assessment of the level of corruption in the country, said it is difficult to say there is no corruption.

"In Malaysia, it's still done under the table or in the quiet, unlike other countries where it is done in the open," he said. The ACA knows this, and it has means of detecting and monitoring.

"I would like to advise the people not to be involved in corruption, as the ACA has the means to monitor them from a great distance."

He also warned that corruption, if left unchecked, will increase the costs of living and doing business.

Corruption can begin unintentionally, he said, when dealing with government agencies, banks or business dealings.

He divided corruption into two categories: "One which is seen as a crime - shameful and needed to be hidden.

"The second is where bribery is seen as something normal, involving every segment of society. The giver and receiver do not have any feelings of guilt or shame, and practise it in the open."