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## An offensive on corruption

THE Deputy Prime Minister's urging on the public service to "act against corruption" has raised hopes in the public mind that the fight against graft will continue until it is wiped out. No longer will the average Malaysian fall victim to, for example, officials looking to profit from circumventing laws, rules and regulations. Instead, things will again be as predictable as A preceding B in the Roman alphabet and as ba follows alif in the Arabic script, as it was in the past.

Given these hopes, it is only to be expected that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will maintain and enhance the necessary measures, while he holds the key Cabinet portfolio in the battle against corruption and when he takes over as Prime Minister.

Incumbent on him too is the need to end corrupt practices within the ruling political coalition. Only by so doing can he be assured that his political will and intent to carry on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's legacy is not manoeuvred into non-action.

For, there is no doubting that the country can only advance with meritocracy even while the need for affirmative action remains. Malays will have the leg up they need and there is nothing to stop subsidy and other assistance from being given to those most deserving of them. Corruption, however, will skew national development away as more and more leakages occur. Resources will be wasted on the dishonest and the undeserving.

Fortunately, that has yet to happen here. Unlike some countries where one bribes one's way through life from cradle to grave, there are still large swathes of Malaysia's public sector untouched by corrupt practice. The aim is to nip its spread in the bud and the best way is to re-empower morality. Achievement must be wholesome enough to encompass more than just Mercedeses and diamond-studded Rolexes. It should follow the example of Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun Ismail Ali - three Malaysian giants honoured by Transparency International.