

Corruption - PM has betrayed Malaysians
Malaysiakini.com
March 9, 2007
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Malaysians have felt betrayed over the statement by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi by which he dismiss any likelihood of two high-ranking government officers being suspended while corruption allegations against them are investigated,

The PM has betrayed himself, he has betrayed the public and he has betrayed Umno, which has enough problems of its own with its money politics disease. I'm amazed that in the midst of the PM gearing towards achieving his 'Cemerlang, Gemilang, Terbilang' mantra, his stand towards the two high-ranking officers can be so lax. It is a shame to all Malaysians.

I will tell you why. First, the two involved are PM's two 'generals' in the crusade against corruption. One is in charge of the ACA while the other is his own deputy in charge of internal security including the police force. One cannot imagine how the two leaders, vital in the battle against corruption, are themselves tainted with corruption allegations.

As the Malay proverb aptly describes it, 'Harapkan pagar, pagar makan padi'. How can Malaysians believe in the war against corruption if the 'generals' have never have believed in the struggle in the first place?

Secondly, the PM's statement comes in wake of the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Survey 2007 which indicates that graft and abuse of power are rampant. This goes to show that the battle against corruption by the PM for almost three years now had been without any significant achievement. I'm not pessimistic but for any effort, there must be results. At the moment, I'm not even convince we are even close to any significant results.

Thirdly, the promise to fight corruption by the PM must come together with improving democracy and freedom because a transparent government is a democratic government. To be democratic is to remove obstacles to freedom, for example laws and regulation which do not stimulate the free flow of criticisms of the government.

Repressive legislation must be abolished and our previous experience tells us that these acts are mere tools to protect the wrongdoings of the government and to curb public queries on hanky- panky activities concerning government projects.

Unless our crusader PM handles this problem seriously and shows some results in removing these obstacles, there will come a time when no one will believe him. Malaysians will then need to change to a new crusader with stronger army that can send shivers down to the spines of those who engage with the country's worst enemy, corruption.

Finally, more public awareness is needed to tackle the problem of corruption. All political parties too must be wholeheartedly involved to curb the problem.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/64330>