

PM would have 'renewed Zulkipli's contract'
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi must table a White Paper in Parliament on the serious corruption scandals against two high-profile figures, said parliamentary opposition leader Lim Kit Siang.

In a statement today, he said the premier must also agree to allocate time for a parliamentary debate on the White Paper.

Lim said Abdullah's stand that investigations into the two cases will not be revealed to the public was a "further breach of his reform pledge and agenda for an open, accountable and transparent administration."

Last month, the nation was rocked by the explosive graft allegations against former Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) director-general Zulkipli Mat Noor and Deputy Internal Security Minister Mohd Johari Bahrum.

Last Friday, Abdullah said the government had decided not to renew Zulkipli's contract which expired on March 31. He later added that the new director-general would be announced soon.

Lim said the premier's inability to immediately name the new ACA chief was proof that Zulkipli, a former high ranking police officer appointed to helm the ACA in 2001, would have been given another extension if not for the scandal.

The opposition leader said he would be "the first" to welcome the delay if Abdullah was adopting a new and more consultative process for the appointment of key posts.

"However, there are no signs that the delay is because the prime minister is adopting a more transparent and consultative process in the appointment process but because he was caught totally off-guard and unprepared to fill the post," he added.

Biggest failure

Lim said it has become completely untenable to extend Zulkipli's term when the latter had plunged the ACA and country into the greatest integrity crisis in the nation's history.

"Zulkipli's repeated extension as ACA chief will probably go down as one of the biggest failures of Abdullah's premiership – when a new director-general should have been selected when Zulkipli's appointment first ended under his premiership on March 31, 2004.

"How could Abdullah be serious about his pledge when he became prime minister and during the 2004 general election to make anti-corruption the top priority of his administration and a major difference with the previous Mahathir administration when he leaves untouched the person who headed the ACA with such lacklustre record for the last two years of the 22-year (Dr) Mahathir (Mohamad) premiership?"

he asked.

The allegations against Zulkipli were contained in a letter penned by former Sabah ACA director Mohd Ramli Manan last year. The letter, first reported by malaysiakini, was exposed by an anti-corruption watchdog.

While Zulkipli has denied the allegations, the police have set up a special team of 10 officers from Bukit Aman and the Kuala Lumpur police contingent to investigate the matter.

Meanwhile, Johari landed in the spotlight when an anonymous online posting accused him of taking RM5.5 million in bribes to free certain criminal suspects held under the Emergency Ordinance.

He too has denied the allegation and the case is being investigated by the ACA.

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