

Don't question Pak Lah's battle against graft
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Do not question the prime minister's commitment in combatting corruption in the country, warned Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Nazri Abdul Aziz in Parliament today.

"We hope everyone, including the opposition front, do not use graft issues against the government as this will only strengthen the wrong perceptions others have on our country," said the Padang Renggas representative in his winding-up speech on the motion of thanks on the Royal address.

"It will also affect the flow of foreign investors to our country," he added.

Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur) however responded by saying that the country was facing the worse crisis of corruption in 50 years of independence and 40 years of the formation of the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA).

"We have serious corruption allegations against many top officials like judges, deputy internal security minister, the Sabah chief minister, the Sarawak chief minister and the ACA chief himself. How can you be so proud?" asked Lim.

"Don't you think that the government must work harder in fighting corruption," he asked.

Nazri replied that he was neither proud nor ashamed, and that the government was working towards its goal to eradicate graft.

"We cannot simply arrest innocent people just because we're fighting corruption. We must not only catch those who accept bribes, but also those who offers bribes," he added.

Lacking political will

Lim argued that the government needed political will to eradicate corruption.

In recent months, a litany of corruption allegations have surfaced against top level politicians and high-ranking civil servants.

The latest involved allegations against Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud who was implicated in a scandal allegedly involving RM32 million in kickbacks paid by Japanese shipping companies for state timbers.

Another chief minister, Sabah's Musa Aman, had also been allegedly mired by a host of accusations involving graft and abuse of power.

These two scandals came in the wake of explosive allegations of corruption involving Anti-Corruption Agency chief Zulkipli Mat Noor, who has since step down, and Abdullah's deputy in the Internal Security Minister, Mohd Johari Baharum.

Both individuals, who have denied the allegations, are currently under investigations.

Brain drain - no need to panic

On another matter, Lim said that the exodus of the smart ones from the country looking for better opportunities elsewhere was alarming.

"We used to be better than Japan and Singapore, but now we're lacking behind because of brain drain that is due to discriminations in the country," said Lim.

He also drew attention to a recent remark by the Perak Regent Raja Nazrin Shah who urged the government to instil "a sense of belonging" to all Malaysians to lower the rate of brain drain.

To this, Nazri replied that although he agreed with Nazrin, the brain drain was however not the result of any lack in sense of belonging.

Brain drain, said Nazri, was the result of "money sense".

"They leave to make money but they will return. You don't have to press the panic button yet," he said.

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