

Yes to election pledge, but much more to be done

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By Leven Woon

Parliamentarians from both sides of the political divide lauded the election integrity pledge launched by Transparency International Malaysia yesterday, saying that they would ink the pledge before the upcoming general election.

Sg Siput MP Dr D Jeyakumar (PSM), Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai (DAP), Temerloh MP Saifuddin Abdullah (Umno) were supportive of its contents which promoted good governance and was against money politics.

psm gst forum 210110 d jeyakumar Besides the pledge, Jeyakumar (left) said another way to minimise corruption amongst the peoples' representatives was for the authorities to make allocations to them.

Currently representatives are forced to find their own funding to even run their service centres.

"If you leave it politicians to (source their own funding), they will seek help from businessmen, who may want some kind of payback.

"The way to cut down this kind of graft is to cut down the process and make funding available in the system," he said.

The PSM central committee member opined that an annual RM100,000 allocation for representatives to employ three staff and operate a service centre was adequate.

"They should also emulate Germany in setting aside an amount of money for parliamentarians to hire researchers, so that parliamentarians would ask quality questions in the house," he said.

Lifelong commitment

Tan, the DAP national election bureau chief, also firmly endorsed the pledge, saying he and his party will be signatories.

"Integrity and good governance should be the lifelong commitment of every politician," he said.

When commenting on the money culture allegedly prevalent in the political process, Tan took a jab on the government's new initiative to regulate political funding for all political parties.

He said the initiative, which directs political contributions to be channeled directly to the party's official account and contributors to be issued receipts, would not deter money politics.

"This would not work as no one can ensure that the contributions, either to a particular politician, a branch committee or division committee, achieve its intended objective.

"We need stringent measures in place, for example contributions above certain amounts must be accounted for and must be available for public scrutiny," he said.

NONE However, Saifuddin (right), who is an Umno supreme council member, opined that the initiative was a good first step to combat money politics.

He said the country is on the right track what with the establishment of the Institute of Integrity Malaysia, and the running of a series of campaigns, but wished the process could be faster.

"The government should start using technology that can curb corruption, such as the introduction of an internet-based system to make the procurement process transparent to bidders and public.

"For example right now, I don't even know how many percent of Public Works Department (PWD) tenders are done under open tender," he added.

Saifuddin, who wrote a book in 2008 to advocate political integrity, noted that Umno has made efforts in curbing corruption by amending the party constitution to allow 150,000 members to choose its party leadership, compared with 3000 members in the past.

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