

Will Najib practice what he preaches on corruption?

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MP SPEAKS Will BN leaders pass the test to walk the talk in fighting corruption by making a public declaration of assets, implementing open competitive tenders, bar family members from being involved with government business and drop BN leaders with extravagant lifestyles?

Prime Minister Najib Razak's speech at the opening of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities Conference urged leaders at all levels of society to exhibit the right values and ethical conduct in order to prevent corruption. Unfortunately Najib is long on rhetoric but short on action in fighting corruption.

The drop in Malaysia's Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from No. 37 in 2003 to No. 60 in 2012 is the most damaging indictment of BN's failure to root out corruption.

Worse, TI Malaysia deputy president Mohammad Ali even noted that Malaysia's CPI has continued to decline as "elements of state" that facilitated "grand corruption" were still prevalent. Even Housing and Local Government Minister Chor Chee Heung admitted that corruption costs Malaysia RM26 billion every year.

Again, Najib has failed to walk the talk leading to not only the Malacca chief minister proudly showing off his son's wedding with 130,000 guests, never mind who paid for it or how much it costs.

So far there are no answers to disturbing questions about the extent of the extraordinary wealth of Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud with allegations that his family is worth billions of ringgit.

The enormity of Taib's family wealth is corroborated by the current divorce proceedings of his son Mahmud Abu Bekir Taib, in which his ex-wife has revealed that he is worth at least RM1 billion, with personal accounts all over the world.

If Najib wants Malaysians to take his fight against corruption seriously, then he must institutionalise public declaration of assets. This has been done in Penang where the chief minister and the entire state exco has made a public declaration of assets that has even been certified by an international accounting firm. If Penang can do it, why can't the prime minister and his federal cabinet do the same?

At the same time, BN leaders with extravagant lifestyle owning luxury homes, cars and even number plates must be dropped. Family members must also be barred from being involved in government businesses to avoid another RM 250 million 'cows and condos' National Feedlot scandal.

Another necessary element in the battle against corruption is to institutionalise open competitive tenders. Without open competitive tenders, public projects are directly negotiated and awarded to cronies causing loss of public revenue such as the cheap sale of the Sungai Besi Air Force Base land.

Can the RM386 million for 57 KR1M stores in Sabah and Sarawak or RM6.7 million per store be justified? At RM6.7 million per store, are the KR1M stores selling basic necessities like sugar, salt and rice or luxury items like jewellery and designer handbags?

In Penang, open competitive tenders were implemented immediately after the change of government in 2008 and as a result the state government has been able to achieve surplus budgets every year since, with proceeds from the savings going back to the people annually in the form of an 'anti-corruption dividend'.

This is a result of a zero tolerance of corruption policy where Pakatan leaders pass the test to walk the talk by making a public declaration of assets, implementing open competitive tenders, barring family members from being involved with government businesses and do not have leaders with extravagant lifestyles.

Can Najib apply the same anti-corruption test?

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