

Najib dared to drop 'tainted' octet

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Hafiz Yatim

PKR has challenged BN chief Najib Abdul Razak to drop top party officials who are being investigated for graft from BN's candidates list.

The eight are Umno Wanita chief Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Sabah chief minister Musa Aman, de facto law minister Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz, Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Mohamad Hassan, Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, Terengganu Menteri Besar Ahmad Said, Deputy Finance Minister Awang Adek Hussin and Rural Development Minister Shafie Apdal.

The party's director of strategy Rafizi Ramli (right) said dropping these individuals would prove Najib's sincerity in having "clean" leaders among his ranks.

"Candidates should be seen as whiter than white, and not be tainted as all of those named are being investigated by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC)," he said.

"If Umno is not prepared to drop them, it proves Umno is not serious in putting up clean and winnable candidates as highlighted by Najib," he said.

Independent prosecution and investigation?

When told that these eight have not been found guilty in court and that they are merely being investigated - and that some had been cleared - Rafizi said political accountability is not merely whether they are charged or whether they are found guilty.

"I think the standard that we have to put is that they must be seen as whiter than white. Although they have not been charged, the evidence highlighted by the media, on the Internet and also deduced (against them) is overwhelming.

"There is a perception that they are not charged because the prosecution and investigation are not independent."

If these are independent, Rafizi said those concerned would have been charged.

He said based on the 2008 general election, many Umno and BN candidates are allegedly corrupt as highlighted by the media and who are being nominated again.

Rafizi said it is only after the BN lost its two-thirds majority that action was taken, like in the case of former Selangor menteri besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo (left in photo), who has been found guilty.

"I think the perception applies to that, and I think you cannot fault the people for believing that while they were still not proven as far as the law is concerned, but morally and

politically, there is enough evidence to show complicity on their part in corruption.

"It is as if Umno and BN do not possess candidates who are truly clean, so that you have to take tainted people like these. Although they have not been found guilty, there is enough evidence. As much as we want to have our candidates to be whiter than white, the same applies for Umno and Barisan."

He said the issue of winnable candidates was brought up by them (BN) as they had sent their candidates list to be vetted by the MACC.

"So I think the onus is on them to prove their seriousness in that (to drop) them," he said.

Some of those named, including Shahrizat, have been cleared by the MACC. However, her husband had already been charged in the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court.

Evidence on Terengganu logging

On the issue of allegations of corruption in the Terengganu government in awarding logging concessionaires, Rafizi came forward with proof of the MACC initiating their probe on a logging company.

"This company is being investigated by the MACC, where RM1 million was allegedly paid to a nominee of a person connected to Terengganu Umno (led by Ahmad). The issue of the logging concession is a big issue and the MACC has opened a file on it following complaints.

"The evidence of payment and the agreement signed is related to the purchase of a RM2 company which had been awarded a logging tender in Terengganu. Despite this, there is no inkling of information about when a charge is to be framed," said Rafizi.

He produced a cheque paid by a sawmill factory for this purpose, and the MACC issuing an order to inspect, seize and seal premises on the company which wrote the cheque.

Rafizi further went on to claim that the logging concession was not brought to the Terengganu exco meeting and was approved by Ahmad (left) himself in his administration.

It was reported last month that Rafizi had revealed that a sawmill company had on Dec 28, 2011 forked out RM2.5 million to purchase a dormant company named Berkat Seribumi Sdn Bhd which only had a paid up share capital of RM2, which was granted a logging concession in Hulu Setiu forest reserve.

"This decision was approved by the state Forest Revenue Collection Board meeting which we believe was chaired by Ahmad," he said.

