

Pua: Low must be 'bad cop' in Najib admin

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Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua wants freshie Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Paul Low to act the "bad cop" in the Najib Abdul Razak administration.

Pua said Pakatan Rakyat would provide its fullest support to Low in implementing all necessary measures to ensure a clean, transparent and competitive government.

"NONE In fact, Low can afford to be the 'bad cop' in the Najib administration because he will owe no political allegiance to any person or party," said Pua (left) in a statement.

The DAP lawmaker also wants Low, who was Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) chairperson, to also ensure that all government privatisation and procurement contracts are awarded via open and competitive tenders and that his cabinet colleagues declare their assets, just as the Selangor and Penang Pakatan Rakyat governments had done.

Describing Low's appointment by Najib as "bold", Pua also sounded the caution that the move would also be a barometer for Najib's second-term as prime minister, as to whether he would carry out the far reaching reforms for a a clean, transparent and competitive administration.

Recently, Pua said, the government concluded procurement contracts in the defence industry.

It also gave out mega-privatisation contracts such as the RM5.3 billion West Coast Expressway, the RM2.2 billion Kinrara-Damansara Expressway and the Penang Port and KTM Bhd projects that have not been completed or where work was yet to commence.

NONEThese were contracted out, but not through open tenders.

"The first priority for the BN government, with Low (right) acting as a "transparency minister" is to immediately declare that all government privatisation and procurement contracts henceforth will be awarded via open and competitive tenders, with all details and information made transparently."

"Then, the government should immediately call for a suspension of the above

mentioned projects pending a new open tender exercise, if the Najib administration is committed to the reform pledge as highlighted by TI-M."

Act against Taib Mahmud

Pua, who is also the DAP national publicity secretary, said Low's fellow Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Idris Jala, through Pemandu, had failed to ensure greater transparency, with many ministries openly defying directives to publish the outcomes and details of procurement contracts.

"Low must hence wield an uncompromising stick to enforce discipline among the many ministries to cut back on wastage, corruption and cronyism.

NONE"At the same time, we expect the new administration to be resolute in carrying out effective investigations against those who are corrupt, regardless of the position these powerful people may hold in the government."

For a start, Pua said, the new cabinet must immediately rebuke Sarawak Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud (right) for his outright refusal to cooperate with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), which Taib described as "naughty".

Failure to even admonish such behaviour would erase all "positive" perceptions arising from Low's appointment, said the DAP MP.

Low, Pua said, should also work to raise the bar of transparency in the government by requiring all his cabinet colleagues, ministers and deputy ministers to publicly declare their assets.

"Asset declaration is a critical element to regain public trust in the administration, which has been riddled with corruption and abuse of power, contributing to a continuous decline of Malaysia's rankings in the TI Corruption Perception Index," he said.

Pua hopes the Najib administration would not just try to have Low's impeccable credentials rub off on the former, without real and tangible reforms being enforced.

"Without such measures by the PM, Low will only become a lame duck minister, and his reputation severely tarnished, " he said.

The eyes and hopes of all Malaysians would be focused on Low's performance to check the rampant corruption in government, Pua said.

"We will not want to be disappointed," the lawmaker added.

Unheard Commonwealth tradition

Pua's fellow lawmaker Liew Chin Tong - who is also the new Kluang MP and DAP political education director - said in the Commonwealth, it is unheard of for a prime minister to hold the position of finance minister as well.

NONE Liew said Najib is continuing with former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's (left) bad precedent by taking the powerful Finance Ministry portfolio, when Mahathir had a fallout with Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Daim Zainuddin and Anwar Ibrahim.

"The role of the finance minister in a Westminster democracy is to serve as the de facto number two in the cabinet with explicit responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the performance of all other ministries through budgetary checks and financial audits.

"This essential component is sorely lacking in the Malaysian cabinet. The PM also chairs the Economic Council - a new entity established after the 2008 general election - which bypasses the cabinet, but made all the economic decisions on behalf of the cabinet, hence further eroding any remnants of checks and balances."

This, he said, consolidates the power to Najib and it is done at the expense of the nation's best interests.

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