

Ambiga dares PM to declare his assets

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been challenged to declare his assets to show that his administration's commitment towards a zero tolerance approach on corruption.

Former Bersih 2.0 co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan, in making the challenge, also opined that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) must be led by someone who is willing to compel an asset declaration from the premier.

"It is not good enough to say you don't have power... I'm looking for a MACC chief who will resign if there is interference in his work.

"I am looking for a MACC chief willing to investigate the prime minister.

"But mostly, I am looking for a prime minister who will say he is willing to be investigated and declare his assets," she said in a hard-hitting speech last night.

Ambiga said this during the launch of Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism's (C4), a new anti-graft watchdog.

Of late, there has been increasing pressure on the MACC to fully utilise its powers to crack down on grand corruption by political elites.

Ambiga, a senior lawyer and former Bar Council president, said that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 empowered the commission's officers to act on mere suspicion.

However, it seem that the MACC was currently "tying its own hands" by claiming that they do not have prosecutorial powers, she said.

Ambiga said that the Act also allowed for MACC investigators to compel those in public office to declare their asset.

"They (MACC officials) are worried (asset declarations) will endanger the safety (of those being investigated).

"(So MACC is saying) it will only endanger you because you are a millionaire or

billionaire, which says a lot," she said.

'Software' missing

Ambiga said the situation surrounding the establishment of the venerated Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in the 1970s was similar to Malaysia.

Among the examples of Hong Kong prior the clean-up was the pervasiveness of corruption in enforcement agencies, government bodies, commerce and everyday life.

"That describes us right now," she said.

The ICAC brought major changes to Hong Kong in three years, she said, and today the Hong Kong's biggest selling point is that it is virtually corruption free.

She said although the MACC was modeled on the ICAC, their achievements are worlds apart.

"We have all the necessary structures. We have the hardware, but what's missing is the all-important software - political will.

"We have zero political will to get to the root of corruption in this country," she said.

The cheekily-named C4 - also the codename of the explosive used to blow up the body of a murder victim in the heart of a high-profile corruption scandal- was later launched to the deafening sound of about 100 whistles.

The group aims to educate and raise awareness on the impact of corruption to the common man and to agitate action against corruption, particularly among rural communities.

The woman blown up by the military-grade explosives was Mongolian national Altantuya Shariibuu who was linked to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's associate Abdul Razak Baginda.

Abdul Razak was charged for abetting the murder but later acquitted without his defence being called.

A company owned by his wife also received high commissions in the purchase of submarines when Najib was defence minister.

Critics have also questioned the lavish lifestyles of Najib's wife and family, including his stepson Riza Aziz, whose luxury apartment cost more than RM100 million.

Riza has declined to comment on the matter, while his mother Rosmah Mansor had consistently denied any wrongdoing.

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