

Zahid: Gov't is serious in fighting corruption

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The Malaysian government is serious in combating corruption and this has been proven by the increase in the number of cases been convicted, Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said today.

He said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) conviction rate had soared from 54 percent in 2009 to 78 percent in 2014.

"The international Corruption Perception Index Malaysia has also improved three places from 53rd out of 175 countries in 2013 to 50th in 2014. This was the second best placing in Asean after Singapore," he said in a statement here today.

Zahid, who is also home minister, said the government intended to do far more, and has set itself aiming to be in the top 30 by 2020.

"We are looking into plans to strengthen the independence of both the MACC and the office of the auditor-general," he said.

Zahid said last year the United Nations Convention Against Corruption review had praised the government for its work stating that Malaysia has received recommendations for best practices in a total of 23 areas, the highest number out of all countries reviewed.

These include the absence of a statute of limitations which helps to stop wrongdoers evading prosecution, the establishment of 14 specialised anti-corruption courts, where judges are instructed to hear cases within one year and can be held accountable for non-compliance.

These also included the initiatives within the private sector, such as integrity pacts to fight bribes and collusion, which has recorded more than 142,000 that had signed it in Malaysia, he said.

Incidence of poverty reduced

Zahid said these included the high level of commitment to tackle graft internationally, whereby Malaysia had received praise for taking steps to expedite extradition procedures and simplifying requirements for evidence.

"In countries with high levels of corruption, efforts to tackle poverty and promote development suffered because of this," said the deputy prime minister, adding that that was not the case in Malaysia.

Zahid said the incidence of poverty in the country was reduced from 3.8 percent in 2009 to 0.6 percent in 2014.

While the World Bank ranked Malaysia as the 18th easiest place to do business out of 189 economies in 2015, and in the IMD Yearbook 2015, Malaysia was ranked as the 14th most competitive country out of 61 economies surveyed, he said.

"We would not have achieved these results if corruption was not being addressed with the full force of the law," he said.

Noting that the theme of the International Anti-Corruption Conference currently being held in Putrajaya is Ending Impunity, he said that the Parliament Accounts Committee (PAC) would be re-instituted in the next parliamentary sitting and its enquiries would continue.

Zahid added that it was unfortunate for heads of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to come to Malaysia, only to be duped into recycling baseless allegations and unwittingly involving themselves in the country's internal politics.

We are confident we will win the war against corruption, and will continue reforms to improve integrity and transparency within the public and the private sectors.

"Those who are found to have violated the law will be charged and prosecuted. The prime minister has already made this clear, but let me repeat it - there will be no impunity," he said.

- Bernama

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