

Lim: Fallacy of ministers in select committees
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The resignation of Bernard Dompok as chairperson of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity shows that ministers should not be chairing the committee.

Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang also said that the shock resignation showed that the prime minister's commitment to fight graft is "window dressing."

"Dompok's shock resignation as committee chairman yesterday must be regarded as a red-light warning that the national integrity and anti-corruption campaign of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has run aground after 42 months," he told a press conference in the Parliament lobby today.

Dompok, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, resigned yesterday following a last minute cancellation of a meeting after Lim said he would propose that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad appears to testify.

The agenda was to be on Sabah, specifically on allegations that the government is issuing fake identity cards to illegal immigrants. In a statement yesterday, Dompok said that "I feel that as a member of the cabinet I may not be able to do justice to the tasks assigned to the committee by Parliament."

Lim says Dompok's resignation as the committee chair is "not a matter which merely concerns him."

Complex conflict situations

"This is because of his invidious and enviable position of chairing the Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity while being a cabinet minister," he said.

"This mix-up of the separate executive and parliamentary roles undermining the doctrine of the separation of powers of the executive, legislature and judiciary has created complex and grave conflict situations, as the role of parliamentary select committees is to present viewpoints and proposals which are independent and distinct from those of the executive for consideration and adoption by the cabinet," he added.

He said such a situation where cabinet ministers chair parliamentary select committees is "completely unheard of in other Commonwealth parliaments, as it creates inherent conflicts and contradictions which has resulted in situations like Dompok's resignation." It also makes a mockery of the recent statement by DPM Najib Razak that "fighting corruption remains a national mission and the government is all out to eradicate graft."

"Dompok's resignation as committee chair has proved Najib wrong," he said.

"The question all remaining members of the committee should wrestle with is - should they all follow Dompok's example and resign if the committee cannot be effective and play any meaningful role in the National Integrity Plan to promote public integrity and push back the rising tide of corruption?"