

Shahrir: Before talking about ACA, fix Parliament first
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It's all well and good to propose that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) should report to Parliament as a demonstration of independence, but Johor Bahru MP Shahrir Abdul Samad thinks the federal legislature itself needs to be fixed first.

He made this point at a press conference after launching the report on the inaugural Malaysia Transparency Perception Survey 2007 in Kuala Lumpur today.

Over 70 percent of the 1,025 respondents felt that the Anti-Corruption Agency should report directly to Parliament.

"The first priority is to give an institutional role to Parliament, then we can talk about submitting full reports to (it)," he said.

"(We should) address the issue of Parliament first. How can we parliamentarians talk about good governance when we don't even govern ourselves?"

His main concern has to do with the fact that Parliament is like a 'department' without decision-making powers.

"We just go to Parliament, make our speeches and go home. We are not even involved (with) the management. I think that's not absolutely something to be proud of," he said.

"While it's flattering to give ACA reports to Parliament, there's a lot of work (to be done) in Parliament itself before we come to that stage."

Time for co-operation

Shahrir was also asked for his thoughts on legislation to protect whistleblowers.

"It's fine to have protection for whistle-blowing. I think anybody who gives information for whatever (matter should) get protection. I'm not aware of anybody that has been penalised for giving the right information," he said.

However, Shahrir was less forthcoming when asked about allegations currently circulating about ACA Director-General Zulkipli Mat Noor and Deputy Internal Security Minister Mohd Johari Baharum.

"I think (the cases are) being investigated, let it be investigated," he said.

Zulkipli, a former high-ranking police officer, has been accused of amassing properties and wealth beyond his means, but has denied the allegation.

Johari was said to have ordered the release of two triad kingpins and a suspect involved in vice activities this year, allegedly for bribes exceeding RM5 million. They had been detained under the Emergency Ordinance 1969.

Shahrir viewed the Zukilpli case as "a question of all parties co-operating in the investigation".

Pressed for comments on Johari's case, he said the minister should declare his assets.

"As deputy minister of internal security, he has to co-operate fully to clear his name. That's the most unfortunate thing about being a public figure - everybody believes all the accusations thrown at you," he noted.

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