

Give up internal security portfolio, PM told
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should give up his internal security minister portfolio and appoint a full time minister in order to avoid allegations of corruption.

In a statement today, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said the premier already has numerous other responsibilities to handle.

"The prime minister has his plate full and has too much to handle when he is both the internal security minister as well as finance minister.

"For better governance, greater efficiency and delivery, he must start delegating some of the duties. Or are there no Barisan Nasional leaders he can trust to carry out the duties of internal security or finance minister?" he added.

Lim said the corruption allegations against Deputy Internal Security Minister Mohd Johari Baharum does not reflect well on the handling of the ministry.

The opposition leader also urged Abdullah to abolish the Emergency Ordinance (EO) or sections that oust judicial oversight of ministerial orders.

'Freedom for sale' scandal

Last week, the Internal Security Ministry came under scrutiny when it was alleged that Johari had accepted RM5.5 million in bribes to free certain detainees held under the EO.

However, Johari denied the allegation and instead blamed the police for not carrying out proper investigations with regards to these cases.

He also claimed that the police were not following standard operating procedure. Johari is currently being investigated by the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) while the police are carrying out an internal probe to determine if there were any weaknesses on their part.

The 'freedom for sale' scandal came hot on the heels of graft allegations against ACA director-general Zulkipli Mat Noor last week.

The allegations were contained in a report penned by former Sabah ACA chief Mohamad Ramli Manan.

The report was sent to Abdullah, the former inspector-general of police, attorney-general, auditor-general and the civil service director-general last year. Yesterday, ACA deputy director-general Ahmad Said Hamdan said the allegations against Zulkipli had affected the image and morale the agency.

Anti-corruption drive

Commenting on this, Lim said it is not only the integrity of the ACA that has been affected but questions have also been raised about Abdullah's commitment to battle corruption.

"How can the public have faith and confidence in the ACA when the ACA fails the test of 'not only being clean, but seen to be clean'?" he pointed out.

The opposition leader also asked why Abdullah failed to take immediate action following the report from Ramli last year.

"Such delays can be explained if it is made by an ordinary member of the public but not when it is made by a senior officer that is the former ACA director of Sabah," he added.

Apart from the graft allegations, the report also highlighted that a businesswoman had accused Zulkipli of a sexual crime and assault in 1997 when he was the Johor police chief.

However, Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail later said that police investigations then found no grounds for prosecution.

Zulkipli, a former high ranking police officer, has denied the allegations. A special task force is currently investigating the matter.

Zulkipli was appointed to head the ACA in 2001. Following this, his tenure was extended by both former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Yesterday, his deputy revealed that Zulkipli's contract is expected to expire at the end of this month despite earlier reports stating that his tenure was extended until 2008 by the premier two years ago.

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