

## **Why is the ACA chief still on duty?**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**March 28, 2007**

Frustration over the lack of action against embattled Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) chief Zulkipli Mat Noor is beginning to show.

Penang-based rights group Aliran is confounded that Zulkipli, who has been accused of corruption, continues to be on duty and in service as the ACA director-general.

"There is this real fear that, because of his top position, he has access to ACA files and information pertaining to his case. It is legitimate to wonder whether there is a possibility that evidence can be tampered with or witnesses threatened," said Aliran president P Ramakrishnan in a strongly-worded press statement today.

Ramakrishnan argued that Zulkipli's continued presence in the ACA is tarnishing the image of the agency.

"An institution entrusted with the highly demanding responsibility of checking and eradicating corruption cannot be headed by an individual whose character and integrity comes under a cloud of suspicion. We cannot tolerate this absurd situation. The prime minister must surely understand this," he said.

"Aliran is of the view that Zulkipli should be indicted. Indicting an officer while the case is being investigated is part of the disciplinary process. When an officer is cleared, he can be reinstated without suffering any loss in salary or seniority to his rank. Why should it be different for Zulkipli, Mr PM?"

Ramakrishnan also expressed fears that Malaysians are losing confidence in the ACA as a body dedicated to wiping out corruption.

"When citizens no longer view the head of this very important agency as a man of impeccable character, then the entire outfit suffers. Its credibility is shattered and the very purpose of setting up the ACA is rightly questioned.

"We cannot have a person remaining in such a crucial office if his integrity has been called into question or if there is the slightest hint of irregularities."

## **Fresh allegations**

Ramakrishnan is responding to fresh allegations that Zulkipli was allegedly bribed to stop investigation into complaints of abuse of power and corruption against Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman.

The new allegations came hot in the heels of charges that the country's top anti-graft fighter has amassed wealth beyond his means.

Last month, malaysiakini reported a set of explosive allegations against Zulkipli made by former Sabah ACA chief Mohamad Ramli Abdul Manan.

Zulkipli, who is currently being investigated by the police, has denied the allegations.

Despite that the charges against Zulkipli were raised many years ago, his contract was extended three times - first by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and later by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi - after he was first appointed in 2001.

Yesterday, Abdullah said that he would made an announcement on whether Zulkipli's term as ACA boss would be extended when his term expires in three days.

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