

Graft index worsens during Zulkipli's tenure
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What exactly has outgoing Anti-Corruption Agency director-general Zulkipli Mat Noor achieved since taking over the agency's helm in 2001?

Judging by Malaysia's ranking on the Transparency International (TI) corruption perception index (CPI), Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang doesn't think Zulkipli deserve much commendations.

He said when Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over the premiership in 2003 and pledged to eradicate corruption, the CPI placed Malaysia as the 36th least corrupted country, which dropped to the 44th spot in 2006.

"That's 21 places worse than in 1995 when TI first released its annual CPI figures," said Lim in a statement today.

Lim was commenting on a statement issued by Abdullah yesterday, announcing the non-renewal of Zulkipli's contract and expression of gratitude over his six-year stint in the department.

"Under the leadership of Zulkipli, various proactive and renewal efforts were undertaken including upgrading the network of collaboration at the international level," Abdullah said in the statement released late last night.

The embattled Zulkipli had his contract extended by Abdullah three times since 2004. Zulkipli is presently under probe by the police for alleged false declaration of assets, abuse of power and sexual assault.

'Zulkipli well travelled'

On Abdullah's comments, Lim said there was no use in 'upgrading' the ACA's 'international network of collaboration' when allowing domestic corruption levels to soar.

"Zulkipli had undoubtedly scored another first among all ACA director-generals in the past 40 years - being the most travelled ACA chief attending the most number of international conferences, though with the least results in stopping the rot of corruption despite the biggest budgetary and staff increases for the agency in the past three years," he said.

"It will be salutary if the full list of the international conferences and foreign trips which Zulkipli made during his tenure as ACA chief be made public, as he clearly was more interested in the ACA's 'international collaboration' than in the real war against corruption in the country".

Lim warned that Abdullah was running out of time to salvage his anti-corruption pledge in view of the many high-profile corruption cases that has surfaced of late.

"It must be very galling for Abdullah that (even) the former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has now turned the table on him with the latter repeatedly declaring that corruption today is worse than under his 22-year premiership - and with more and more

people agreeing," added Lim.

To salvage the anti-corruption campaign, Lim suggested that Abdullah must appoint a suitable candidate who can command public confidence.

"The Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity (which Lim is part of) should be consulted on the appointment of the (new) ACA chief who should not come from the police ranks after the disastrous example of Zulkipli," said the veteran opposition leader.

In addition, Lim said Abdullah must also heed the often repeated calls for the ACA to be moved away from the Prime Minister's office and be made answerable only to Parliament.

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