

Government 'covering up' ACA scandal
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There are efforts to cover up the corruption allegations against former Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) director-general Zulkipli Mat Noor, claimed an anti-corruption watchdog today.

Movement for Democracy and Anti-Corruption (Gerak) chairperson Ezam Mohd Nor said the government is trying to let the case 'fade away' by not extending Zulkipli's contract, which expired on March 31.

Speaking at a press conference at the Gerak office in Kelana Jaya, Ezam questioned the sincerity and seriousness of the government in investigating the case.

"We have enough reasons to question the sincerity and seriousness of the government in this issue.

'Firstly, why does it take so long to investigate? We are concerned that the authorities are trying to buy time and let the issue fade away,'" he said.

He claimed that this is not the first time the government has tried to cover up corruption allegations.

Khalil Yaacob's case

He cited the allegation of discrepancies in the awarding of timber concessions against former Pahang Menteri Besar Khalil Yaacob as an example.

In 2001, former Beserah state assemblyperson Fauzi Abdul Rahman had lodged a police report over this and Umno launched an internal inquiry into Khalil, who was then party secretary-general and information minister. He is currently the governor of Malacca.

"There was a police report against Khalil, but no investigation, Khalil (right) was just released from his government post as minister. Nothing more than that. We are afraid the same thing might happen (with Zulkipli's case)," said Ezam.

He said when the government appoints a new ACA director-general, the people will gradually forget about the scandal.

The allegations against Zulkipli were contained in a report penned by former ACA Sabah director Mohd Ramli Manan last year. Gerak exposed the document last month.

A special police team is currently investigating the case while Zulkipli, who is a former high ranking police officer, has denied the allegations.

Royal commission

Meanwhile, Ezam also criticised the government for not letting an independent body

investigate the case.

He said the deputy minister overseeing the police is being investigated by the ACA while the former ACA chief is being investigated by the police.

"Due to the connection between the police and ACA in these two issues, there is a need to set up an independent committee," he added.

Ezam was referring to another corruption scandal which surfaced just days after the Zulkipli case.

The second case involved Deputy Internal Security Minister Mohd Johari Bahrum who was alleged to have accepted RM5.5 million in bribes to free certain criminal suspects held under the Emergency Ordinance.

Johari has denied this and the case is being investigated by the ACA.

Ezam also called on the government to form a royal commission to look into the ACA just like how it did with the police.

"Why can't the same be done for the ACA? Will it implicate too many high ranking leaders in the government?" he asked.

Quizzed on who should helm the ACA, Ezam said the government should appoint a credible judge or former judge to rectify the agency's problems from a legal perspective, including restoring its prosecution powers.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he will make an announcement on the new director-general as soon as possible.

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