

**Ministers should re-declare assets at resignation**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Mar 21, 2008**  
**Cheah Kah Seng**

I refer to the Malaysiakini report Ministers, deputies to declare assets.

I agree that ministers, their deputies, state executive council members, city council members, their spouses, and non-adult children must publicly declare assets and liabilities.

In the past, the 'private' declaration of assets to the prime minister was a joke. Declaring spouses' assets is also important, as illustrated by the Thai examples, where most ministers' wives turn out to be richer than their husbands by many folds.

In addition, the PM and menteri besar must require that the ministers and council members sign legally-binding agreements to declare their assets AGAIN at the end of their term or when they resign. This is to allow an evaluation of their asset acquisitions when they are in power.

When a minister starts with an enormous asset base, we must respect the sanctity of private property and cannot prosecute the person simply because he or she is fabulously rich. We can only prosecute a corrupted politician if there is (1) evidence of prior graft, (2) evidence of under-declaration of assets, and (3) an unexplained large increase of assets between the beginning and end of terms.

The politicians' non-adult children's assets should also be declared, as they are controlled by the parents.

However, I draw a line to include adult siblings' and parents' assets, because they are separate individuals with their own privacies to protect. To force government executives to declare the extended family's assets will discourage good people and reduce family support for them to enter public services.

Where do you end? Declare the assets of the siblings' spouses, their adult children, their in-laws, etc?

Further, if the siblings or parents lie or are negligent in their declaration, is the politician accountable for the adult siblings' mistakes? No. Public asset declarations should stop at spouse and non-adult children.