

Don't get excited yet, say anti-corruption watchdogs
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Syed Jaymal Zahiid

Belated though it may be, the decision to accord full independence to the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) received a cautious welcome from constant critics of the current system.

DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang wrote in a blog-post that it appears to reflect the government's move to initiate reform to restore public confidence in the ACA.

"Reform measures to restore public confidence in the efficacy, efficiency, independence, impartiality and credibility of national institutions, whether (the) judiciary or the ACA, are welcome as they have been long-awaited by the people," he said.

However, Lim warned that the 'new ACA' should not only be independent nominally but must be spearheaded with utmost commitment in eradicating corruption.

lim kit siang and dap"(Do not become) a second Suhakam (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia) which is tasked to be an independent body to protect and promote human rights but is completely unable to do so without the necessary powers and wherewithal to carry out such a [...] mandate."

Lim, who is Ipoh Timor member of Parliament, said the government should have originated the move, rather than wait to act on a proposal submitted by the ACA last week.

"This was clearly putting the cart before the horse as it is the prime minister and cabinet who should take the policy decision that they have heard the voices of the people in the March 8 'political tsunami'," he noted.

Abdullah today surprised many with his announcement that his government would implement measures to loosen the government's grip over the ACA and make it answerable only to Parliament by year's end.

This is one of four key reform initiatives to address public concerns on corruption.

Activists react

Human rights group Suara Rakyat Malaysia said the people should not get too excited over the decision.

aca bpr anti corruption agency 271107"We must take into consideration the kind of 'independence' the ACA will have. Are we talking about full independence or nominal independence?" asked coordinator Moon Hui.

He said the appointment of ACA staff must be done through public consultation via civil society groups, so that the body can be held accountable directly to the people.

The independent anti-corruption group Gerak, headed by Ezam Mohd Nor, said this is "the most significant move taken by the government since the days of reformasi" in initiating change.

A new political will

Meanwhile MCA president Ong Ka Ting also welcomed the announcement today to make the ACA fully independent and answerable to the Parliament.

mca central committee meeting 080108 ong ka ting "We wish to see the performance of the ACA strengthened and a new political will being forged to ensure the independence of the ACA is truly upheld," he said in a statement today.

"We want the rakyat to understand that the BN government is serious about tackling corruption in the country, both in the public and private sectors.

"Accountability must also be all encompassing to include the integrity of the entire system and respect for the moral values of our society," he added.

He said that it was through the collective responsibility of the Parliament that decisions can be made, without fear or favour over the cases.

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