

Consumer group wants AG's Chambers reformed
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 25, 2008
Rahmah Ghazali

Now that Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has started his reform agenda by proposing bold changes for the Anti-Corruption Agency and the judiciary, he should train his sights next on the Attorney-General's Chambers, said a consumer activist.
MCPX

jacob george cassa 240408 02 "If you want to have an excellent reformed judiciary, you want to have reformed ACA, don't you think it is high-time we also call for the AG Chambers to be reformed?" asked Consumers Association of Subang and Shah Alam (Cassa) president Jacob George.

He proposed that the powerful prosecuting agency was also made accountable to Parliament.

"When we look at how the law operates in this country, the present system states the AG is not accountable to anybody but himself," he told Malaysiakini.

Amend the Penal Code

The push toward the reforms of the AG Chambers was necessary as no one has been able to question the AG on his reasons for making decisions whether to prosecute anyone or not, added George.

George also said that the Penal Code made it clear that the AG has the final say whether the prosecution can commence and whether the investigative papers that was presented to him was sufficient.

"It is coming to a point now where we are appealing to have the Penal Code amended (to change this)."

"Once the Attorney General is made accountable to Parliament, automatically everything will fall into place because then, the checks and balances are there," he added.

"We have seen corruption on the rise, we have seen high-profile figures being investigated but no charges have been brought against them. We need change," George said.

Signature campaign

George was also disappointed to see that everything in this country was shrouded in secrecy.

"In India, despite its poverty, an average taxi driver can go to the highest level and pay a couple of rupees to get some documents if he wants to know about some project. Freedom of information is available over there," he explained.

Cassa is presently working with other NGO's and society leaders to organise a five-million signature campaign, if necessary, to push ahead with its call for the AG Chambers to be reformed.

"If the prime minister really means reforms in the manner where the grassroots is expecting, then this decision to make the Attorney General accountable to the Parliament cannot be pushed to another day," he added.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news//81913>