

Abdullah : It's not about my legacy
Malaysiakini.com
Dec 10, 2008
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the two 'reform' Bills tabled for first reading in Parliament this morning should not be seen as a legacy of his tenure.

The Malaysian Commission on Anti-Corruption (MCAC) and the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) Bills were drafted to curb graft and improve confidence in the judiciary, he said.

abdullah ahmad badawi pak lah parliament pc 101208 03 "I do not want to talk about legacy... I've never associated myself with any intention to create a legacy. What I want to do is what should be done..." Abdullah said.

"People said something has to be done about this and I decided to do it. I should have done it over the last four years but there were a lot of things I needed to do.

"People may ask 'why are you doing this now?' I have decided to do it and I shall be working until the last second as a prime minister."

Abdullah will step down from his government and party posts next March, after handing over to anointed successor and current deputy Najib Abdul Razak.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the economic council meeting, Abdullah said he is "happy in a way" because he had intended to table the Bills as early as possible.

"The Bills are very important because issues related to both these bodies have raised various perceptions. And these perceptions are not very agreeable," he said.

He identified corruption as a major issue that has hogged headlines and which has been raised by politicians. There has been a need to increase public confidence since "many have expressed dissatisfaction and feel the government is not capable of getting rid of corruption".

aca anti corruption agency and money and investigate Abdullah also acknowledged the perception that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) does not have the capability and powers to deal with corruption.

"The same goes for the judiciary", which has been hit by criticism, especially in relation to the current process of appointing and promoting judges.

"Both these bodies have been the target of negative perceptions and need to be reformed... and in 2004 I decided to introduce reforms, although the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) came first," he said.

Confidence and credibility

The two Bills are also intended to change the perception of investors, who are said to be dissatisfied with corruption and an unsatisfactory judiciary.

Abdullah said it is important to bring in changes that will restore confidence in and the credibility of the judiciary.

Saying he is aware of differing views of reform, he nonetheless hopes for support because the Bills were drafted after discussion with various parties.

He was asked about the effectiveness of the proposed JAC, given that the prime minister will retain extensive control over its functions.

"It has not changed the prerogative of the prime minister under Article 122 (b) of the constitution... the prime minister will still consider the names submitted to the King," he said.

He claimed that such prerogative would not influence the commission's credibility as "there is a different practice now which is more transparent".

"There is collective wisdom in this matter, it was not decided by us only."

The MCAC, said Abdullah, will be monitored by an advisory board, a special committee of selected commissioners and a complaints committee to look into any reports of misconduct by officers in charge.

He disclosed that more officers would be employed and given the required training, and that some of them would be specialists in forensics and ICT.

Abdullah also said the attorney-general (AG) had delegated powers of prosecution to the ACA in October.

"The AG can get involved when it is necessary but it does not mean he will interfere every time... the deputy public prosecutors at the MCAC will execute proceedings without interference unless it requires the (intervention) of the AG," he added.

Abdullah has also pledged to table the Special Complaints Commission Bill, which was withdrawn late last year. Critics have dismissed it as a watered down version of the IPCMC.

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