

Be truly professional, PM tells MACC
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The newly established Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) must act above board in all of its dealing.

It was also very important that the commission remained fair and professional.

This was the advice given to the commission by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when he launched the body at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

The MACC is the brainchild of the premier in his efforts to clean up corruption effectively. The commission came into effect in January, replacing the Anti-Corruption Agency.

In his speech, Abdullah said MACC officers, regardless of position or rank, must carry out their duties to the highest standard of professionalism.

Dedication, impartiality and fairness must be part and parcel of their job.

"In that sense, your conduct, while on duty or even off duty, must always be beyond reproach and in conformity with the laws of the land.

"If not, all our efforts thus far to implement institutional reforms may come to naught," he said.

Not a rebranding exercise

Stressing the importance of the MACC in carrying out its duties without fear or favour, Abdullah said much of the success or failure of the commission will depend on the conduct of its officers in carrying out their duties.

Abdullah also said the government does not want the efforts to set up the MACC to be regarded as mere rhetoric or a rebranding exercise.

"Without significant changes to the structure and improvement in its effectiveness, there are bound to be perceptions about the MACC being impartial, a toothless tiger, selective in its enforcement, slow in taking actions and unprofessional in its investigations.

"These perceptions will, in some ways, mar the image of the MACC," he said.

He said the MACC was set up not because of pressure from any party or due to political or economic considerations, but out of the government's genuine wish to create a respected Malaysian society that practises high integrity and rejects corruption in all aspects of their lives.

A Bernama report quoted Abdullah as saying that the MACC has been given additional legal powers to investigate certain forms of corruption which were out of the jurisdiction of the Anti-Corruption Agency which it replaces.

He added that this would enable the MACC to widen its net to investigate newer forms of

corruption and to gather evidence more effectively, thus increasing its conviction rate.

The MACC will be increasing the size of its force, including investigating officers, to approximately 5,000 over the next few years, he said.

"I am confident that these changes will raise the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the MACC and enable it to transform itself into a world class anti-corruption enforcement agency."

Anti-corruption agenda must continue

He also stressed that the commission must be able to stand up to scrutiny.

The premier also noted that the fight against corruption could not be mounted, let alone be won by policies, campaigns, laws and punitive measures imposed by the government alone.

Abdullah also said that he was confident that his successor Najib Abdul Razak will continue with the anti-corruption agenda.

"At the end of the day, it must be remembered that no change or improvement in the way we manage our economy or business can be sustained if our attitude to good governance is out of sync with the people's aspirations or with contemporary global trends," he said.

Abdullah is to hand over his post in government and party to Najib next month. Najib was present at the event today.