

Dompok influenced by

Kit Siang, says Nazri

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KUALA LUMPUR: Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz said his cabinet colleague Tan Sri Bernard Dompok was influenced by Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang when Dompok was head of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity.

Commenting on Dompok's shock decision to resign from his post on Wednesday, Nazri said: "His idea of the scope of responsibility of the committee is strongly influenced by Lim Kit Siang's view that the committee has wide powers to investigate issues raised by the people they met which, to us, is entirely wrong."

"The select committee is not a permanent committee to look into grouses and grievances. It's outside their scope."

Lim is the deputy head of the 12-member committee, set up in late 2005 to get feedback from the people on integrity issues. It has two years to do the job and to report to Parliament.

Dompok resigned after the committee called off a Tuesday hearing on forged identity cards in Sabah because the National Registration Department refused to appear before it.

He had said that as a member of the cabinet, he might not be able to do justice to the tasks assigned to the committee by Parliament.

Nazri, whose portfolio covers parliament affairs, said there was a "wide gap" between Dompok and the other ministers' understanding of the scope of the select committee.

"I think because of this he could not proceed further and resigned," he told a press conference at the Parliament lobby.

He said most of the ministers understood that the duty of the committee was to meet people, get

feedback and formulate programmes on integrity.

Citing the committee's plan to call former Anti-Corruption Agency director-general Datuk Zulkipli Mat Noor before a hearing in March over the allegations of corruption, Nazri said it was a clear case of the committee being unclear about its powers.

He said like the Select Committee on Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code Amendments and that on National Unity and National Service, all select committees operate on an ad hoc basis.

Asked if Lim had influenced some decisions by Dompok, Nazri said: "I think so. BN backbenchers had informed me. I learnt from their reports that Kit Siang is influencing some of his decisions, which I think is true."

On Dompok's statement that the NRD had declined to appear before the committee, he said he had barked up the wrong tree.

"The matter should be channelled to the ministry concerned. They want to get to the bottom of the matter but it's nothing to do with their responsibility."

Nazri said the committee should meet urgently to decide on the new head.

In an immediate response, Dompok said: "It is a cheap shot. What else can I say?"

Asked to comment on Nazri's statement that he was influenced by Lim, he said: "That's why I said it was a cheap shot."

He said "it is a free country, so he (Nazri) can say what he wants".

"We have different opinions all the time. This one, he chose to go public."

Dompok said the duty of the committee was to ask questions to the relevant government departments on issues raised during the committee hearing held nationwide, including in Sabah and Sarawak.

He said the forged identity card issue was raised during the committee hearing in Sabah and "that was why the committee had a responsibility to call the National Registration Department to explain the matter".

"It is part and parcel to hear it out, so we can inform and report to the Parliament. We are put there to get feedback," he said.

Attempts to contact NRD director-general Datuk Abdul Halim Muhammad or its public relations officers for an official statement failed.

Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) president Tan Sri Ramon V. Navaratnam said the prime minister's vision to improve the delivery system and overall efficiency would be extremely difficult if the attitude shown towards Dompok was deemed permissible.

"The integrity, accountability and transparency of our government will be open to wide speculation, doubt and unfavourable comments, both domestically and internationally, if this matter is not treated with seriousness and utmost priority as it has led to a dead end to the problems of illegal immigrants and foreigners," he said.

"Public opinion at home and abroad will be adversely affected if prompt action is not taken to improve the integrity, accountability and transparency of the country's public administration."

