

# Ethics panel to guide MPs

NSP- 5/12/2006

THE Dewan Rakyat has taken the first step towards drafting a code of ethics and integrity for Members of Parliament.

A Parliamentary Select Committee on Ethics has been set up to draw up a list of dos and don'ts.

Headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Whip Datuk Seri Najib Razak, it will suggest and accept regulations to be used by MPs as guidelines on ethics and integrity.

New duties and responsibilities will also be outlined.

The committee comprises 12 members from the ranks of veteran MPs, including those from the opposition.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz, the committee deputy chairman, said the panel would have a two-year mandate to carry out its duties.

A motion will be tabled in the current sitting to debate its



## ■ Reports by V. Vasudevan, Anis Ibrahim and June Ramli

formation.

The committee is likely to have its first sitting next year.

"It will sit before the Royal Address next year. We are serious about this. Don't think that we are treating this lightly."

Nazri said clear guidelines on MP behaviour would be spelt out.

"It will be codified and MPs will know where they stand on anything related to ethics or if

their behaviour breached any ethical standard set for a Member of Parliament."

He said the committee would not assume the role of the House Privileges Committee, which retains its role as a disciplinary board.

Nazri said the move to set up the ethics committee grew out of the controversy surrounding Jasin MP Datuk Mohd Said Yusof.

Mohd Said had asked the Customs and Excise Department to "close one eye" over the importation of illegal sawn timber.

Nazri said it was Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad (BN-Johor Baru) who had suggested setting up the committee.

On May 5, Shahrir called for a code of ethics during a meeting with Najib after quitting as Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club chairman.

Shahrir's resignation was prompted by the failure to re-

fer Mohd Said to the privileges committee.

Two days later, Najib, while on a visit to Kuching, announced that the Cabinet would discuss the formation of a select committee to draw up a code of ethics for MPs.

On May 8, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, on his return from the World Congress on Information Technology, welcomed the suggestion.

The prime minister stated that it was a good move to form such a committee to frame rules for MPs and that the rules should apply to all, including the opposition.

The other committee members are:

- Transport Minister, Selayang MP and MCA deputy president Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy;

- Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister, Miri MP and Sarawak United Peo-

ples Party vice-president, Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui;

- Public Accounts Committee chairman and Johor Baru MP, Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad;

- Parti Bersatu Sabah president and Keningau MP, Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan;

- Deputy Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, MIC vice-president and Tapah MP, Datuk S. Veerasingham;

- Parliamentary opposition leader, DAP adviser and Ipoh Timur MP, Lim Kit Siang;

- Pas secretary-general and Tumpat MP, Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar;

- PBB committee member and Santubong MP, Datuk Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar;

- Acting Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club chairman and Larut MP, Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainuddin Raja Omar; and

- Puchong MP, Lau Yeng Peng.