

# Code of Ethics to ensure MPs' conduct beyond reproach

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THE thrust of the proposed Code of Ethics for Members of Parliament is to identify immoral or unethical conduct, and not illegal or criminal behaviour.

Parliamentary Select Committee on the Code of Ethics member Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad said an MP's conduct outside Parliament should be beyond reproach.

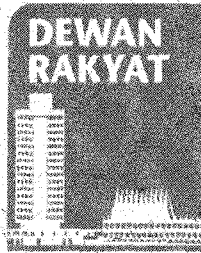
"An MP's position in society warrants such a code of ethics," he said.

He said MPs should be subject to rules which govern their behaviour as they were chosen by the people.

"It is because of their status that they should exhibit a high standard of ethics," he said.

Shahrir, also Johor Baru MP, said a simple example would be if an MP abused his position in dealings with government departments.

Other examples, he said,



■ Reports by  
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could be gleaned from rules formulated by other Commonwealth Parliaments.

The British House of Commons, for instance, maintains a register of Members' interests, such as their business dealings or involvement with projects or foundations, so the public is aware of their association in such matters.

"In India, Sonia Gandhi had to step down as an MP because she received a salary as a member of a foundation," Shahrir added.

The issue was first raised by Shahrir in May when he reminded Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak

that the committee was part of the National Integrity Plan.

"I felt it was important to have a code of ethics after the controversy concerning Jasin MP Datuk Mohd Said Yusof," he said.

In early May, Shahrir resigned as Barisan Nasional

Backbenchers Club chairman after he failed to refer Mohd Said to the parliamentary Rights and Privileges Committee for his alleged misconduct with the Customs and Excise Department.

"The code of ethics will not be binding law, but merely guidelines. The committee will not have the power to dismiss an MP as that will curtail the fact that he was elected by his constituents."

On Monday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz announced the setting up of a Select Committee on Ethics for MPs.

The committee, which will comprise 12 veteran MPs, will be headed by Najib and assisted by Nazri.

A motion to debate the formation of the committee will be tabled in the current sitting.