

'Corruption is like cancer', Zahid Hamidi tells Ambiga
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 — Datuk Seri Zahid Hamidi today blasted a call by Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan for Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to consider amnesty in minor corruption cases, saying the Bersih 2.0 chairman's suggestion would only lead to increased bribery.

Yesterday, Ambiga said PR should pardon those involved in minor corruption if it wins Putrajaya so the country can move forward quickly after a change in power.

She stressed, however, that this did not mean those found guilty of large-scale corruption should be similarly pardoned.

"She should be aware that minor corruption could lead to major corruption. Corruption is like a cancer. We should weed it out irrespective of whether it is committed by 'small fish' or 'big fish,'" the defence minister was quoted as saying by Bernama Online today.

Zahid's defence ministry is no stranger to corruption allegations, and regularly sees its multi-billion defence contracts being queried by PR lawmakers.

Most recently, PR parliamentarians demanded an explanation for the defence ministry's purchase of six littoral class patrol ships for a whopping RM9 billion — an increase of RM3 billion from the original RM6 billion approved earlier last year.

The ministry's previous decision to pay RM7.6 billion for armoured personnel carriers (APC) procured by DRB-Hicom Bhd for only US\$559 million (RM1.7 billion) drew similar questions from PR parliamentarians.

The government maintains that such contracts must be classified as a matter of national security, but PR insists that Malaysians have a right to know how public funds were being spent given the ministry's history of cost overruns.

Anti-graft watchdog Transparency International-Malaysia (TI-M) has also urged the government to stop to using national security as an excuse for the secrecy that ends up hiding graft involving defence contracts, and consider appointing independent monitors for such deals.

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