

Malaysia most corrupt report — proof that Najib and Low have failed, says opposition
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Corruption has become endemic in Malaysia, say opposition politicians in response to a report just released by Ernst & Young which ranked Malaysia as among the most corrupt nations in Asia.

They are also not surprised at Malaysia's ranking, saying this was evidence of the failure of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his minister Datuk Paul Low (pic).

Low, the former president of Transparency International-Malaysia, was recruited by Najib as a minister in the Prime Minister's Department after the 13th general election to aid the government's efforts to combat corruption.

"This is like a slap on Paul Low's face, especially since he recently insisted he was not merely an accessory in the government," said DAP's Bukit Mertajam MP, Steven Sim.

He added that all the talk of fighting corruption was rhetoric.

The report, titled Asia-Pacific Fraud Survey Report Series 2013, said Malaysia, along with China, had the highest levels of bribery and corruption found anywhere in the world.

It also listed Malaysia as among the countries most likely to take shortcuts to meet targets when economic times are tough.

Bukit Bendera MP Zairil Khir Johari (pic) agreed with Sim and felt that the report was proof that corruption had become endemic in Malaysia.

Saying that the findings were "hardly surprising", Zairil added that the report was consistent with past surveys such as the Global Financial Integrity report, which named Malaysia as one of the countries with the highest amount of illicit capital flight.

"This will definitely hamper not only our ability to attract investment, but it also means that there are real structural issues that inhibit economic efficiency.

"Corruption means money is wasted, and this contributes to our deteriorating financial position, in light of mounting public debt and increasing deficit," he warned.

Zairil cautioned that if the menace was not addressed, the consequences would be severe.

He noted that, currently, the negative outlook rating by Fitch was a clear indication that something was amiss, adding that if the country's sovereign credit rating was downgraded, it would result in higher costs of borrowing, thus impacting the entire country.

In July, global ratings agency Fitch Ratings revised Malaysia's sovereign credit rating outlook from stable to negative as the possibility of addressing public finance weaknesses had deteriorated after GE13.

"The solution in fighting corruption is down to political will. It requires no infrastructure investment as it is nothing radical," said Zairil.

He added that this included making the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission truly independent, as the current scenario was that only the small fish were caught while the major perpetrators escaped.

"For example, until today, no one has been convicted for the Port Klang Free Zone fiasco, when it entailed RM12 billion of public funds. The National Feedlot Corporation scandal is another case in point," said Zairil. - September 27, 2013.

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