

Nazri: Graft on the rise in the past six years

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CORRUPTION has been on the rise from the time of the Mahathir administration and is not a recent phenomenon.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said the opposition should not think that corruption took root during the Abdullah administration.

Corruption had been growing for the past five to six years, he added.

"Even when Dr Mahathir (was the prime minister), the slide was there. That's what we are doing now, checking the slide. We must first stop the slide and work our way up," Nazri told opposition leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur).

Lim had said that the government had been indifferent in its fight against corruption, resulting in Malaysia slipping five spots on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2006.

He had stated that the corruption index had improved by leaps and bounds even in Thailand and India.

Nazri said that while it would take time for the government to excise the "cancer" of corruption, it was resolute in not allowing corruption to become "terminal cancer".

Replying to points raised at the committee stage during Budget 2007, he said the government had implemented programmes to fight corruption. However,

eradicating it would be a long-drawn process, he added.

On Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar's (Tumpat-Pas) query on whether the prime minister's children or son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin, had declared their assets, he said they did not have to do so as they were not members of the administration.

On the case of Port Klang assemblyman Datuk Zakaria Mat Deros, Nazri said the ACA was investigating him.

"The findings will be revealed once investigations have been completed or if he is charged."

Zakaria has been embroiled in a controversy surrounding the construction of a mansion in Pandamaran without approval.

Earlier in the lobby, Nazri said the Anti-Corruption Agency had been told to study the reasons behind Malaysia's drop of five spots in the CPI 2006.

"We have to strengthen integrity among the public and in government agencies to restore Malaysia's image in the global arena," he said.

"We have a bigger mission now, to fight corruption. The government is going to concentrate on doing just that as this is what the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wants," he said.

Malaysia ranks 44th in the CPI 2006, a drop from 39th last year. It occupies the 10th spot among the 25 economies in the Asia-Pacific region.