ACA's hands are tied

Money politics not public transgressions

The Star - 2/11/2006

KUALA LUMPUR: The Anti-Corruption Agency cannot investigate cases of political corruption or money politics because these offences are confined to political parties and not public transgressions, said Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz.

The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department said political parties were associations for members only, hence positions in such organisations were not public posts.

He, however, said this did not mean that members could buy votes in a party election because the political parties had their own mechanism such as a disciplinary board or committee to handle such misdemeanour.

"But the ACA can't come in because this (money politics) has nothing to do with the public. It does not affect the public in the sense that it does not involve public projects or public funds," he said in an interview.

"Members are immune from action outside the party (for wrongdoings within the party). That's my opinion. I may be wrong but I tabled the law (Anti-Corruption Act) in Parliament. That's my understanding of it."

Nazri, who is an Umno supreme council member, said a political party was a self-regulated association, and that was why he likened money politics to a situation within a family.

"For example, in a family where you have 10 children and you have a ruling that the family must decide on things together, and the father gives one of his children RM1 and says 'support papa, not mama' is that corruption?" he asked.

"I don't think so, because there is no abuse of public funds here.

"Corruption is the abuse of public funds. You must read it in the context of the law. You can't take one section away. The law is all about public projects and funds."

On a different matter, Nazri also explained the need for clause 17(1) of the Anti-Corruption Act 1997, which makes it mandatory for any officer of a public body to report a bribe offered even though he had rejected it.

Under the law, if an officer fails to report the offer of a bribe (even though he did not take it), he could be fined up to RM100,000, jailed up to 10 years, or both.

"Even if the officer did not accept the bribe, the act of giving has happened. This will make people realise that it is their duty to inform or report a bribe or an offer of a bribe. We can't fight corruption alone. Everybody has to chip in."