

MB must act in rakyat's interest

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REWIND:

In the regulations it does not say that people who break the law cannot be appointed councillors. We appoint councillors according to their party positions. This is decided by the party, so anything concerning the party, we will refer back to the party management committee.

I will follow the orders, which say appointment of councillors has to be according to their party positions. So, if there is any problem we will refer to the party management.

- Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo at a press conference after the state executive council meeting on Oct 18.

FAST FORWARD:

The state exco has deliberated on this matter. We have already made a decision to withdraw the councillorship from Zakaria. However,

it is better for Zakaria to tender his resignation to the Klang Municipal Council chief by Nov 8.

- Mohd Khir at his open house in his Sungai Besar residence on Saturday.

THE menteri besar's statement on Oct 18 was unequivocal - Port Klang assemblyman and Klang councillor Zainal @ Zakaria Mat Deros is untouchable.

Defending Zakaria's re-appointment as a councillor, he argued that there is nothing to prevent law-breakers from being appointed councillors.

At his open house in his hometown of Sungai Besar on Saturday, Mohd Khir was in his element - he made an about-turn and declared "Zakaria must go".

One can only guess that he got his courage after the Sultan had advised Zakaria to resign.

The state exco meets every Wednesday, and unless

it met on the second day of Hari Raya Aidilfitri, it does not compute, but it all seems part of a *sandiwara*.

What was not in the well-prepared script was that Mohd Khir would be forced to eat his words that the "party determines appointments".

Zakaria's term as councillor ended last month. He was supposed to be sworn in for another term on Oct 19, but that ceremony was called off.

Technically, Zakaria is not a councillor, and therefore, Mohd Khir's ultimatum - resign or be sacked - looks very much part of the script, which also includes the RM24,000 compound fine instead of prosecution under the Town and Country Planning Act, which carries a maximum penalty of RM500,000 and a jail sentence.

So, what next? Mohd Khir has maintained his elegant silence on why 43,000 sq ft of land was alienated to Zakaria's wife, Zizah Ngah and how the state government amalgamated eight plots to build the *istana*. This is not an isolated case of selective land alienation. The records of the Anti-Corruption Agency will show that there have been numerous reports on abuse of power, including one that four teenagers were given scores of hectares in Selangor.

But leaving that aside, local authorities are coming under close scrutiny. Besides, the Sultan's advice that all representatives put the people's interests first and preserve the good name of Selangor is a timely reminder that all's not well in the country's only self-declared fully developed state.

When Transparency International released its survey on the level of corruption in the Selangor Municipal Council three years ago, Mohd Khir pooh-poohed it as an opposition ploy. But that report reflects what is happening on the ground. It's not only Selangor whose councillors went to Mauritius and South Africa to inspect toilets or Klang where councillors break the law with impunity.

So, what is going to happen to some Petaling Jaya councillors who orchestrated the "donations for advertising licences" scam? Or about councillors in Ampang Jaya who have built hawkker complexes on state land?

The Sultan did not mince his words when he said that he had received letters from ordinary *rakyat* of Zakaria's antics in Klang. Surely, he must have a dossier on several other miscreants who have disgraced their positions.

When *theSun* exposed the PJ billboards scandal, Mohd Khir was quick to say that the Selangor exco did not approve the deal. Instead, he sheepishly accused "*theSun exco*" of doing it.

On Oct 10 when *theSun* broke the story of Zakaria's palatial mansion which other newspapers - save for *Oriental Daily* - refused to touch, we braced for a similar outburst and a similar "*theSun exco*" excuse. Instead of acknowledging that the laws had been broken and replying to the many issues which were raised, Mohd Khir bought time to prepare the script.

The menteri besar, as the chief executive of the state is accountable to every citizen that the people he appoints to sit as councillors have credibility and impeccable reputation. He has the power to hire and fire, and thus, should not wait for a royal prodding to discharge his duties and carry out his responsibilities to the *rakyat*. Or, for that matter, wait for someone to write the script so that he looks good in the eyes of his party supporters and those he is beholden to.

If he continues to back-paddle, twist and turn or waffle at regular intervals, his continuous cries of *Semuanya OK* will sound like a broken record.