

Let Ministers declare their assets

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I applaud the call by the chief commissioner of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Datuk Seri Abu Kassim Mohamed for members of the cabinet to declare their assets publicly. This is one of the best statements from the MACC so far.

We give Ministers the powers to make decisions involving vast sums of public money. Those decisions have too often led to bloated or stalled projects, questionable awards of tenders, and inflated contract values. Meanwhile some Ministers' lifestyles suggest incomes far beyond what they could possibly afford on their salaries. Ministers' assets are not a private matter to be discussed cosily behind closed doors with the Prime Minister. It is not the Prime Minister's money that we are talking about.

Corruption has become institutionalized in our political system. It is ruining this country. This is not just my private belief. Malaysians from all walks of life believe that corruption has become a way of life and know that many of their leaders are corrupt. They know that corruption is so widespread that it has been normalized. They know it deprives them of what is rightfully theirs in the present and stunts their children's future.

The MACC has a huge task in overcoming corruption. They have had to overcome the perception that they are not serious about pursuing corruption wherever it is found. They would have a lot more credibility with the public if their chief commissioner's call for transparency of Minister's assets were heeded.

Nobody is going to believe that members of the cabinet are above corruption, let alone serious about addressing the problem, if they refuse to declare their assets.

In the same measure the assets of former Ministers should also be made public.