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Hold bosses accountable for civil service graft, say groups

PETALING JAYA: Heads of departments must be held responsible for offences committed by their subordinates to uphold integrity among civil servants, says an anti-graft crusader.

New legislation is also needed to ensure they do so, says Malaysia Corruption Watch (MCW) president Jais Abdul Karim.

He said this was similar to how higher-ups in the corporate sector are held accountable for any wrongdoing by subordinates.

"We are proposing special legislation to make unit or department heads accountable, especially in enforcement agencies," he said, adding that this would serve as a deterrent against any potential wrongdoing.

Transparency International Malaysia president Dr Muhammad Mohan, meanwhile, said a provision called Misconduct in Public Office should be added to the MACC Act.

"This will make civil servants accountable for their inaction or failure in fiduciary duties," he said.

He said civil servants must also change their attitudes and stop ignoring corruption activities committed by their colleagues.

Instead, they should report such wrongdoings using appropriate channels.

"Third, the system of hiring and firing in the civil service must be strictly enforced," he said.

Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism chief executive officer Pushpan Murugiah said there must be stronger whistleblower protection by including an ombudsman office under the Whistleblower Protection Act.

"This can help play a significant role in providing an avenue for whistleblowers to make reports.

"An agency can act as an ombudsman, where whistleblowers can report corruption issues knowing they will be given adequate protection," he said.

He also called for the National Audit Department to be better utilised by doing periodic audits on government departments, their processes as well as mechanisms to flag potential gaps and loopholes.

"We need to empower the audit department to play a more proactive role in curbing wastages and leakages, although we understand it will take more manpower and resources to conduct periodic audits on ongoing operations or projects," said Pushpan.

"The key to fighting corruption is the element of transparency in the business of government. There must be an ecosystem where corruption and criminal activities are easily detected."

DISEDIAKAN OLEH	PN NOR SURIANI BINTI MOHD ZIN (S44), BPM
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