

Report on the National Conference on Political Financing in Malaysia: Challenges for Institutional and Legislative Reforms

On 30 November 2009, Transparency International (Malaysia) organized the first *National Conference on Political Financing in Malaysia: Challenges for Institutional and Legislative Reforms*. The conference was held in Impiana KLCC Hotel with support from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The conference comprised of four sessions, with a total of nine prominent speakers, foreign and domestic. Dato Paul Low gave the opening remarks on behalf of TI-M. The conference was moderated By Josie Fernandez, Ngooi Chiu Ing and Prof Edmund Terence Gomez.

Speakers Profile:

1	Prof. Jon S. T. Quah,	Singapore Anti-Corruption Consultant
2	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Edmund Terence Gomez	Faculty of Economics and Administration, University Malaya
3	Dr. Mavis Puthucheary	
4	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bridget Welsh	Singapore Management University
5	Datuk Wira Haji Wan Ahmad bin Wan Omar	Deputy Chairman, Malaysian Election Commission
6	Tuan Abdul Wahab Bin Abdul Aziz	Director, Excellence and Profesionalism Division, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission
7	Dr. Goh Ban Lee	Research Fellow, Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute, Penang
8	Tan Sri Megat Najmuddin Megat Khas	President, Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance
9	Mr. Philip TN Koh	FCIS, Advocate & Solicitor, High Court Malaya, Senior Partner, Mah-Kamariyah & Philip Koh

The conference was well attended with a total of 120 participants from various sectors. They included representatives from Election Commission and Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission, Ambassador of Belgium Embassy, representatives and officials from Embassies, High Commissions, government agencies, political parties, NGOs, academicians, political analysts, media, etc. The conference received good coverage in the media.

The conference speakers raised a few important issues in pursuing a level playing field in political financing in Malaysia. Professor Jon Quah, for instance, said that the responsibility of eradicating corruption must not be relied upon the Police force. Meanwhile, Dr. Mavis Puthuchery urged that the political parties should depend more on individual contributions rather than corporate contributions. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bridget Welsh and Tan Sri Megat Najmuddin, on the other hand, concurred that it is essential to build up the capacity of the civil service. On the other hand, Mr. Philip Koh stressed that even with the perfect legislation and institutions in place, the problem could still exist if the interpretation of the law is done with partiality. The deputy chair of the Election Commission Datuk Wira Haji Wan Ahmad and Director of Excellence and Professionalism of Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission Tuan Abdul Wahab lamented at the limitation of their respective institutions due to inadequate laws in curbing the political corruption. The Election Act, Election Offences Act and Anti-Corruption Act are silent on matters pertaining to political financing. In response to that, Prof. Terence Gomez proposed that a Political Party Act to be enacted to monitor the political financing of political parties.