

## **Reforming Political Financing in Malaysia: Central Region Public Forum (Kuala Lumpur Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall)**

A public forum with members of the public was organised by Transparency International – Malaysia (TI-M) on 18 February 2011 at Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall. The forum was part of the Crinis project funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Similar to the earlier workshops, this forum aimed to encourage free and frank discussion and exchange of idea, with a view to mobilise public support for reforming political financing in Malaysia. Apart from that, the forum was also meant for disseminating of information, as well as providing public education about political corruption and money politics.

The panelists for the forum were Datuk Paul Low, President of TI-M, Professor Dato' Dr Ishak Tambi Kechik, Former Vice Chancellor, University Science Malaysia, Professor Dr Edmund Terence Gomez, political economy lecturer, University of Malaya, and En Zaid Kamaruddin, Steering Committee Member, BERSIH 2.0. Mr Alan Kirupakaran, Executive Director of TI-M moderated the forum.

Professor Edmund stressed that the practice of voluntary financing of political parties had led to growing monetisation of politics as large private funds flow into the political arena. The close nexus between political parties and businesses is exacerbating the problem further. In order to deal with the problems, he called for institutional and legislative reforms, which are aligned with TI-M's recommendations. On the other hand, Professor Dato' Ishak agreed to all but four recommendations proposed by TI-M. However, he did not reveal the four recommendations that he could not agree on. Prof Dato' Ishak also revealed to the crowd that the National Key Results Areas (NKRA) – Fighting Corruption is considering the proposal of introducing direct state funding for the political parties, a recommendation came from TI-M.

The crowd, on the other hand, expressed their support for the 22 recommendations advanced by TI-M to reform political financing in Malaysia. However, they were not optimistic about the government's resolution and political will to implement all the 22 recommendations. While expressing their disappointment over the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) performance, some even commented that there is a need to emulate the democratisation movement happening in the Tunisia and Egypt to completely wipe up corruption in the country.

A total of 60 participants attended the forum, including Mr Jan Soer, Deputy Head of Mission of Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dato' Ambiga, Chairperson of BERSIH 2.0, YB R. Sivarasa, MP for Subang, representatives from various NGOs, academics, students and members of the public.