

MEDIA STATEMENT

'TIL ELEVEN MORNING INSIGHTS

'The Culture of Lobbying and Funding – Key to Confidence in Public Decisions and Perceptions'

Working together to recover Malaysia's moral fibre

Kuala Lumpur, 4 April 2019 – The Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) in collaboration with the United States Embassy in Kuala Lumpur organized 'Til Eleven Morning Insights held on 2 April 2019 at the Institut Integriti Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur with Azhar Azizan Harun, Chairman of Election Commission of Malaysia and James V. Saturno, a senior manager at Congressional Research Service, USA as esteemed guest panellists. The breakfast session was themed, "The Culture of Lobbying and Funding – Key to Confidence in Public Decisions and Perceptions".

The Election Commission Chairman, Azhar Azizan Harun opened the session by breaking down and defining basic terminologies of democracy, political funding and corruption and their relationship to one another. He strongly believed that Malaysia can have the best set of law in the world vis-à-vis corruption, but without a strong moral fibre safeguarding integrity, all of it will be rendered meaningless.

"State will only begin to criminalize a certain act once the society views a certain act to be abhorrent. We need to abhor that act (corruption) to criminalize it," Azhar said.

In the lively panel discussion that followed, moderated by Ms Firoz Abdul Hamid (ASLI), James V. Saturno of the American Congressional Research Service enlightened the audience about the intricacies of America's political system and how the act of political lobbying is safeguarded under the US constitution under the pretext of freedom of speech which however does not differentiate between commercial and political speeches. He also emphasized on the exceedingly difficult task to regulate public perceptions of speeches made by politicians as there is an imbalance between both commercial and politically-driven speeches.

The EC chief, Azhar Harun meanwhile, stressed on the need to have a public disclosure mechanism constituted as part of the Malaysian law for politicians and public officials to allow for public judgement of their accounts.

The panel also discussed the lobbying of public and private sector towards a preferred candidate, and the transparency and disclosure required in monitoring lobbies and funders when candidates are elected to Office. It also discussed the capping of amounts of funding to political parties and candidates. Also discussed were the benchmarks of exemplary Election Commissions as well as if an EC should have audit and enforcement roles as well. At present, the EC of Malaysia only has an operational role in elections.

Ms.Melissa Ong, the Chief Executive of ASLI said that this Panel Session was organised to bring forth a topical and current subject which requires greater clarity for public understanding.

'Til Eleven is designed for C-Suites, senior public officials as well as registered members of ASLI. The breakfast session allows for active networking opportunities as well as a golden chance for participants to engage on topics that concern their businesses with renowned panellists.

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About Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI)

The Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) is an independent, private and non-for-profit Think Tank headquartered in Malaysia. ASLI is committed to creating a better society and to help organisations enhance their competitiveness, leadership and strategic capabilities through its Public Programmes, Conferences, Publications, Policy Research, Business Councils and CEO peer groups. With over 25 years' experience, ASLI is the super-connector between Government, Business and Civil Society, having managed high-level business partnerships in Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Japan, China, Australia, USA, Canada, Britain, Germany and South Africa. Further information of ASLI is available at www.asli.com.my

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