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Anwar drives home anti-corruption stand

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AIR HITAM (Kedah), Sun. - Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today reiterated that the Government will be firm in its efforts to curb corruption and misuse of powers among top leaders.

He said the Government would not tolerate such ill practices and that leaders, including the wakil rakyat, would also face similar consequences if involved.

Anwar said before Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left for a vacation on May 19, the Prime Minister had advised him to be firm in curbing corruption and not to tolerate it among the top leaders.

"I was advised by Dr Mahathir to be firm in curbing corruption and never tolerate it... whether they are top leaders, Umno leaders, Barisan Nasional component party leaders or high-ranking government officers. We have to start from the top... if we are only concerned about nabbing those who accepted RM20 and let those accepting RM2 million and RM3 million go scot free, we will face the consequences of losing the people's support.

"That was his (Dr Mahathir's) advice (amanah) to me before going on leave.

"There are people who say that while Dr Mahathir is on holiday, there are people being dropped (from service). If they don't want that to happen to them, they have to be careful (cermat sikit)," he said.

Anwar was speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the new Umno Jerlun building.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and State Exco members.

The acting Umno president said the fight against graft and misuse of power should begin with Umno because the party was the thrust of the nation.

"It is because Umno is the leader... if we want to carry out the clean-up action, Umno has to be the first. What is the point of asking the people to be united and respect the leadership if the leadership could not be trusted?"

Anwar said some leaders when given posts were only thinking about personal gain.

"They never asked themselves what is the first thing they should do to help the people.

"For the wakil rakyat, if they want to remain a wakil rakyat they should work tirelessly for the people and they must ensure that they are clean from corruption.

"If they don't do that, their future as a wakil rakyat is not safe. I am telling this now, so that when the times comes, nobody will get upset."

Anwar said the Government had issued numerous warnings and reminders to the leaders not to be involved in corruption and misuse of power.

"The Prime Minister even shed tears at the Umno assembly advising the leaders not to be involved in such practices. Now, we are taking action after giving them several reminders."

Anwar said he did not believe that the Malays would desert Umno if the Umno leaders did not neglect their duties and responsibilities.

The Acting Prime Minister also denied that the Government had paid less focus to the welfare of the rural and poor people.

"There are people who said Dr Mahathir had paid too much attention to mega projects like the Multimedia Super Corridor and Bakun project that he

had forgotten the poor and those in the rural areas," he said.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir had never neglected the rural people and the poor.

Later, Anwar visited the RM65 million Samak Aquaculture's integrated tiger prawn farming project at Kerpan.

He was briefed on the project by Samak Aquaculture managing director Haydar Haydar Al Sahtout.

The project, which was approved by the previous State administration in 1993, turned controversial when some landowners whose hectarage were affected by the project had declined to accept the compensation offered by the State Government.

The project is a joint venture between the State Government and Bin Ladin Group. Under the joint venture, Samak Aquaculture Sdn Bhd was set up to manage the project.

The State Government now holds a 29 per cent stake in Samak Aquaculture while 60 per cent is owned by Asmak Aquaculture Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of the Bin Ladin Group.

Landowners who had agreed to participate, own the remainder stake of the project, 11 per cent, which is being overseen by the State Government to protect their interests.

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