

04/06/1997

Graft: Public to know who once evidence is solid

Fadzil Ghazali

THE Government will make public names of those linked to graft offences only after it has been determined that there is enough evidence to take them to court, Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says.

While the Government is fully committed to fighting corruption, it does not want to see the innocent being unjustly penalised, he said.

"Therefore, our decision is that we are not going to inform the public (about those being investigated by the Anti-Corruption Agency) merely because a complaint has been made. But we will make the information public the moment we have reasonable proof to take the cases to court," he told reporters in Shah Alam after opening a conference on Muhammad Iqbal and the Asian Renaissance.

He was asked to comment on the corruption charges filed against Durian Tunggal State Assemblyman Datuk Sahar Arpan. Anwar said corruption is a legal as well as moral issue, and thorough investigations are required to ensure that injustice does not befall those who are innocent.

"I do not want their good names to be tarnished without strong proof to show that they are really involved and can be charged in court."

On his telephone conversation with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday, Anwar said he contacts Dr Mahathir regularly to keep him informed. The Prime Minister is on a two-month leave since May 19.

"Before going abroad, Dr Mahathir gave a long speech on corruption ... We have opted for a joint decision to be strict and not tolerate cases of corruption, particularly involving administrative officials and politicians," he added.

Anwar said the Government has made it very clear that it will not condone corruption at any level. "We have given the ACA the full authority to curb the problem ... the country is doing well and the economy is vibrant, we do not want this to be jeopardised. We have given ample warnings, and it is now time to act."

However, as corruption is a moral and legal question, it should not be allowed to be coloured by the dictates of the media or the demands of some quarters.

"We are upholding the principle of justice. We cannot assume that a public figure or one in authority is corrupt the moment a complaint is lodged against the person."

On Sahar's status as a state assemblyman, he said the matter will be discussed at the Umno Supreme Council meeting tomorrow.

(END)