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Dr M: I had hoped to testify in Anwar's corruption trial

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he had been hoping that he would be called to testify at Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's corruption trial.

The Prime Minister said by testifying in court, he would be able to explain "what had actually happened and how he became convinced" by the allegations.

Speaking in an interview with Bloomberg Television which was aired over Astro today, Dr Mahathir, when asked whether he felt relief at not having to testify or whether he had been looking forward to appear as a witness, said he thought it would be good for him to testify.

"I wanted to testify ... What they did was to ask me questions ... to ask me to write down my answers ... (but) I feel (that) nothing I write would be adequate," he said, referring to the request by Anwar's defence counsel for him to give a signed statement.

"I will have to speak in the court itself and explain actually what happened because one of the questions was how did I become convinced and that is a long process and you cannot write it down on paper," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir was on the list of witnesses in the trial but last week the defence decided not to call him to the witness stand.

Asked whether he was surprised by the way events had unfolded in Anwar's trial, the Prime Minister replied that he was not surprised by it but he was surprised by the way the proceedings had been going.

"I am surprised at the way the proceedings have been going because never in the history of this country has a trial dragged on for so long with nine lawyers defending the defendant and such coverage of a trial that has never been seen in Malaysia, both local and foreign.

"That is what surprises me. And what surprises me most, despite all these, we are accused of not having a fair trial.

"I don't know what is a fair trial if this is not one," he added.

On the possibility of Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail challenging him in Kubang Pasu, the Prime Minister's parliamentary constituency, he said that it was her right.

"This is a democratic country, they can contest anywhere and if they want to contest in my constituency, they are welcomed. It's their right."

Dr Mahathir was also asked where he would see himself in the future in terms of his retirement and legacy, to which he replied:

"Well, I should have retired last year but my deputy let me down. But I am looking forward to retiring as soon as I carry out my responsibilities and put things right before handing over to my successor," he said.

When asked whether he felt vindicated following the introduction of selective capital controls now that the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange Composite Index had recovered by 100 per cent from its low of 262.70 in September last year, Dr Mahathir said that's what he felt.

"All the indices show that we have done well ... and when you look around Malaysia, which is better than just looking at the indices, you will find that the people have a good life here," he added.

Asked on the measures to restore investors' confidence, Dr Mahathir said the investors were still coming in.

"There are two types of foreign investors. There are those who invest in productive capacities and those who have never been put off by currency

control or otherwise.

"They are coming in ... they are still investing big money, running into billions of dollars in petrochemicals, for example.

"But there are investors who are short term by nature. They come into the share market and they can destabilise the economy by short selling and depress the value of shares.

"So while we expect foreign investors to come in, we look more to those who want to invest in the long term," he added.

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