

On Bloomberg platform, Anwar defends action against news outlet

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has defended his government's action against the business news outlet Bloomberg over the latter's report purporting it is in talks with tycoons to open a casino in Forest City.

At the same time, he downplayed the measures taken against Bloomberg and its reporters.

He said he had taken a "strong position" against the report because the news outlet did not refer to the government beforehand to check the facts on its sources' claims.

Additionally, the matter has implicated the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and has been played up by the opposition.

"That was why I took that (position), but nobody was arrested or the media was banned.

"It was just the process of asking questions, and I think we'll move on," he said.

Anwar said this at the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha, where Bloomberg TV chief international correspondent for Southeast Asia Haslinda Amin questioned him about Malaysia's casino plans.

Bloomberg is the organiser of the forum.

In response, the finance minister said there is no need for Malaysia to issue a second casino licence and made clear that his administration has no plans to do so.

Instead, he said Malaysia's focus on digital transformation, energy transition, and artificial intelligence is sufficient to drive the country's future growth.

Slow pace of reforms

Previously, Bloomberg quoted sources claiming that Anwar had met Berjaya Corp founder Vincent Tan and Genting Group's Lim Kok Thay to discuss setting up a casino at Forest City.

The report also claimed representatives of Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar were present. Sultan Ibrahim is a shareholder in the Forest City project.

Anwar had quickly dismissed the report and police questioned at least one of Bloomberg's reporters following a police report lodged by Berjaya.

Meanwhile, responding to criticism surrounding the slow progress of reforms, Anwar said that radical change will only prompt anger and frustration.

He said this is why reforms introduced in many parts of Europe have failed.

"It's a disaster. You assume that the elites have all the answers without even interacting with the masses. I think this is the basic flaw of the so-called elitist-democratic ideals," he added.

Anwar said that the government has taken measures to improve transparency in government procurements, as well as other anti-corruption policy reforms as proof of his administration's commitment to stem such leakages.

It is also moving to rationalise government subsidies, but he said this must be done judiciously to keep inflation under control and avoid burdening the poor.

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