

Anwar again denies judicial interference, urges respect for legal process

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has reiterated his denial of interfering in judicial rulings, amid growing calls for reform and concerns over alleged disruptions in the judiciary.

He stressed the importance of all parties respecting the appointment process of judges as outlined in the Federal Constitution.

“As I’ve said before, in the two and a half years (since becoming prime minister), I have never interfered in court decisions.

“What’s important is that the (judiciary) appointment process, as stipulated in the constitution and respective jurisdictions, is upheld,” Berita Harian quoted him as saying when met after performing his Friday prayers in Putrajaya today.

The prime minister added that any change in the judicial appointment mechanism will have to be instituted through constitutional amendments.

“If (any party) feels there’s a need to amend (the appointment process), propose

a constitutional amendment. But, for this field, we will follow the process that has long been in practice,” Anwar said.

Constitution as a guide

Commenting on the upcoming Walk to Safeguard Judicial Independence organised by the Malaysian Bar, scheduled to take place in Putrajaya on July 14, Anwar said the stance expressed by authorities previously remains unaffected by the event.

“The event is their (organisers’) decision, but we’ve already made our position clear - the attorney-general and Azalina Othman Said have explained, and even the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has addressed the matter.

“We should just follow the process and provisions set out in the Federal Constitution,” Anwar emphasised.

The walk is set to begin at the Palace of Justice in Putrajaya and end at the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), where a memorandum will be handed over, calling for urgent measures to safeguard judicial independence.

The Bar has clarified that the march is not aimed at defending any particular judge, but to highlight growing concerns over the integrity of the judiciary.

Judicial appointments reform

In a statement yesterday, Azalina, who is minister in the Prime Minister's Department (law and institutional reform) said Putrajaya will initiate a preliminary comparative research study on reforming the judicial appointments process.

Following the retirement of former chief justice Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat last week, several lawmakers and prominent legal figures have raised growing concerns of a possible judicial scandal and government interference within the judicial process.

Certain quarters have also urged Anwar to resign as prime minister, asserting that his involvement in ongoing civil disputes negates his right to advise the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the appointment of judges.

Most recently, the Defend the Judiciary Secretariat, led by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, called on Anwar to step down immediately, warning that it might resort to legal action to address the matter.

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