

Ultimately the King decides

Anwar: No conflict of interest in Najib's royal pardon plea

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SHAH ALAM: Although he would be involved in the process to decide on Datuk Seri Najib Razak's royal pardon application, the Prime Minister maintained there would be no conflict of interest.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim pointed out the final decision would be the prerogative of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as stated in the Federal Constitution.

Anwar said any individual could apply for a pardon in Malaysia and it would be subjected to the law and the due process.

"I don't want to preclude anyone in that matter. But the process is, of course, very elaborate.

"It has to be followed and finally, the decision is solely the discretion of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," said Anwar after launching the *Kita-Untuk-Kita* programme at a People's Housing Project in Shah Alam yesterday.

Anwar also denied his presence at the Pardons Board would be a conflict of interest, given that Pakatan Harapan and Umno are in the same government.

"I think it's a bit premature for me to comment now, because I have not seen anything except Umno's resolution.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki had said the party's supreme council had unanimously agreed to seek an audience with the King to present a memorandum urging Najib be pardoned.

"We don't have to debate this in public because we have to go



Nice to meet you: Anwar meeting a group of children at the launch of the *Kita-Untuk-Kita* (K2K) programme in Shah Alam yesterday.
- RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

through that process," said Anwar. According to Article 42(5) of the Constitution, the Pardon Board consists of the Attorney-General, the Chief Minister or Menteri Besar, or the Federal Territories Minister and not more than three members appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

In December last year, the Federal Territories Ministry was restructured into a department under the Prime Minister's Department.

Anwar did not announce a Federal Territories Minister when he announced his Cabinet last December.

Najib, 69, is currently serving a 12-year jail term in Kajang prison.

Meanwhile, on a separate matter, Anwar said Perikatan Nasional chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin should be pres-

ent in Parliament to understand the government's stance over the ongoing issue involving China on PETRONAS' exploration in the South China Sea.

"He (Muhyiddin) was not present in Parliament, he did not listen to our views, read our statements and comments.

"Consistently, I have said the PETRONAS' Carigali project would continue. That area belongs to us.

"But now, China says no, this is an overlapping region. I said okay if that's the case. Let's talk.

"If we are not going to discuss, are we going to war then?" questioned Anwar.

Anwar also said he never gave an indication of giving in to China's demands.

"We will proceed with PETRONAS' exploration project.

Full stop," said Anwar.

On April 7, Muhyiddin criticised Anwar's readiness to negotiate with China on PETRONAS' exploration in South China Sea, saying it undermined the country's territorial sovereignty.

Muhyiddin said Anwar's remarks indicated indirect recognition of China's claims.

On April 4, Anwar in a speech in Parliament, said that while PETRONAS continued with its activities, Malaysia was open to negotiations on Beijing's concerns.

In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Hague ruled that China's "nine-dash line" (where PETRONAS currently operates) had no legal basis.

Others who lay claim to the area are Brunei, Taiwan, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam.