

Anwar: Powerful people not above the law

PUTRAJAYA: The wheels are in motion to bring certain powerful people to book over corruption, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said it was common knowledge that some individuals had remained untouched over the years as they were deemed "too powerful".

"We have to give a clear signal that no one is above the law.

"Don't play around with the issue of corruption. You can use Islam, (being) Malay, you can be a Tun or Tan Sri, but we will act."

While he did not refer to anyone, his comments came in the wake of Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki confirming that an investigation

had been launched into former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin over allegations of corruption and money laundering.

Earlier this week, the MACC seized Ilham Tower, a building reportedly owned by Daim's family members.

Anwar also spoke about his relationship with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and the next king, Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

He said the Malay rulers act as the umbrella of the country's unity and administration, so it was vital that the prime minister has a good rapport with the king.

"I'm grateful that I have a good relation with Al-Sultan Abdullah and hope that it will continue

with incoming Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

"The relationship between the prime minister and the king must be good as this will help in governance.

"The Sultan of Johor had already said that he would discuss matters with the prime minister to effect change."

Anwar said he had been in constant contact with Sultan Ibrahim, including through WhatsApp messages and phone calls, and was granted an audience with the ruler even before he became the prime minister.

He said Sultan Ibrahim had expressed concern over widespread corruption in the country, which Anwar agreed and described as a

systemic problem.

To another question, Anwar said the government would proceed with the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail if the cost could be substantially lowered.

He said while a final decision had not been made, the government had principally agreed to revive the project, adding that he had mentioned the matter to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

He said the government had to relook its budget as it needed to focus on other areas that needed attention, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure projects, as well as increased expenditure for Sabah and Sarawak.

"We're paying the penalty (for

the project cancellation), which doesn't make sense.

"If we were to proceed, we'll probably make sure that acquisition starts swiftly. Otherwise, the cost would increase even further."

The project, with an initial estimation of RM72 billion, did not take off as both countries failed to reach a consensus before the project agreement expired on Dec 31, 2020.

To a question on the proposed formation of the Malaysian Media Council, Anwar said the government had principally agreed to its establishment.

He said the matter was now with the Communications Ministry, which was drawing up policies and parameters.