

# ANWAR: I WONT PREJUDGE ZAHID

Court process must be independent, PM says on deputy's ongoing case

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, deserves the fairness of being tried before an independent and impartial court.

Zahid, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman and Umno president, is in the dock facing multiple corruption charges involving RM31 million of his foundation Yayasan Akalbudi's (YAB) funds.

In an interview with Bloomberg TV in Singapore on Monday, Anwar said he had made it very clear that the courts must be independent and that he would not prejudge Zahid's case.

"I am not here to discuss his case. I am here to suggest that the court process be independent and that he must be given a chance — the fairness of being adjudicated by an independent, impartial court."

The full transcript of the interview was published yesterday at [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com).

During the interview, Anwar al-

so told off Zahid's detractors, saying there were also other political leaders who were facing accusations of abusing their positions when they were members of the cabinet during the previous federal administration.

"He (Zahid) has been investigated and charged... is undergoing trial and the court should decide independently. I made (it) very clear that the courts are independent and I do not think I should prejudice the case.

"But it shouldn't be just purely political.

"Why refer to him (Zahid) personally when I've said that the system is corrupt.

"There are so many other political leaders who have abused their positions — former prime minister's, former finance ministers — by the hundreds and millions of dollars," Anwar said.

He declined to comment when asked what would happen to his unity government in the event Zahid is found guilty of his corruption charges.

"Let us move on. We have to work from day one to ensure that the system that we have has good governance... is free from corrupt leaders.

"And I think, to be fair, they have observed these rules now.

"There's not one trace I can find of any (member of) my team now

trying to squander (money) through contracts or projects, and I'm fine with that.

"People should judge me (based on the performance of my administration) the last two months."

Zahid, who is Bagan Datuk member of parliament, is facing 47 charges, including 12 for criminal breach of trust (CBT), eight for corruption and 27 for money laundering involving RM31 million of YAB funds.

For the 12 CBT charges, Zahid is alleged to have used the funds to make payments for personal credit cards, insurance policies and licences for his personal vehicles, as well as remittances to a law firm and contributions to the police football association.

The charges carry a maximum of 20 years' jail, whipping and a fine.

On another matter, Anwar said there should be no questions to dispute the stability of his unity government.

He said the federal administration under his leadership had survived the test of confidence when it was put to the vote in the Dewan Rakyat in December last year.

"What is important is (that it) has been tested in Parliament and we secured a two-thirds ma-

majority, which is stronger.

"I don't need a two-thirds majority. I need a comfortable or strong majority.

"There is no indication that there is friction within the coalition. For now, the government is stable. It has not been this stable for the last 10 to 15 years. That's good enough for Malaysia."

Anwar said it was imperative for political leaders to set a good example to regain the credibility of the nation.

"There are political leaders who are not there for money and avoid all cases of corruption, abuse. People are fed up with the situation and Malaysia shouldn't be known for its financial scandals or malfeasance. It should be known for its vibrant, multiracial society with a capacity to move forward."

During the interview, Anwar also spoke of a wide range of topics, including the backlash elicited by his decision to appoint his daughter, Nurul Izzah, as his senior adviser on economic and finance matters on a pro-bono basis.

"She's qualified. She's not being paid for the job. She's someone I trust to help me out.

"She can deliver. She's not abusing her position. She's not using it to try and abscond some funds to give your cronies.

"That is a sickness and the rotten system we inherited, and she is there, together with many other colleagues of mine, to try and dismantle that."



Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim