

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, speaking after the cabinet meeting in Putrajaya yesterday, said the government has never interfered in investigations conducted by enforcement agencies. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH



PROBE INTO BERSATU ACCOUNTS

'NOTHING TO FEAR IF MONEY IS LEGIT'

It is MACC's duty to probe legitimacy of the funds, says agency chief

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PARTIES whose financial records are under scrutiny by the authorities have nothing to worry about if their funds were from legitimate sources.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki, commenting on the probe into Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's (Bersatu) accounts, said its investigation was, among others, focusing on establishing whether the party's funds came from valid means.

The anti-graft body, he said, was only carrying out its duties.

"We are probing alleged abuse of power and money-laundering. It is our duty to do so. Among others, our focus is to determine whether the funds were obtained legitimately.

"If the investigation reveals no wrongdoing by the party, then we will advise the attorney-general that there is no case. But if there is evidence showing otherwise, then that would be different," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Azam also gave his assurance that the investigation would be handled professionally and with full integrity.

MACC on Wednesday confirmed that it had frozen several of Bersatu's bank accounts.

It is understood that the move was related to the alleged misuse of RM600 billion in government funds during the Covid-19 pandemic, when Perikatan Nasional (PN) was in power.

PN and Bersatu leaders had since challenged Pakatan Harapan (PH) component parties PKR and DAP to publish their audited accounts.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, in response yesterday, said PH component parties would have no issue if the MACC wished to probe into the coalition's finances.

He said PH component parties had always promptly submitted their financial statements to be audited by the Registrar of Societies (RoS) annually.

Azam, commenting on Anwar's statement, said MACC was duty-bound to investigate any quarter, even ruling parties in the government, if any allegations arose and reports were received.

"We conduct investigations based on reports lodged. If there are instances of abuse of power, there will surely be those who want to report them.

"However, there have been no such allegations levelled against the current government," he said.

Anwar, speaking after the cabinet meeting yesterday, said the government had never interfered in probes conducted by enforcement agencies or matters relating to the judiciary.

Anwar rejected claims by Bersatu secretary-general Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin that the government was using MACC to destroy Bersatu and PN's credibility.

He said the two bodies remained independent and it was irresponsible for opposition leaders, who were being investigated

for alleged misconduct, to accuse the government of having a hand in the matter.

"Absolutely no (interference from the government). It is very assumptive of the opposition to accuse us (the government) of interfering (with the investigation by MACC)," he said.

Anwar said his government would not repeat its predecessors' style of exerting pressure on dissenting voices.

"The only thing I appealed for was that they (enforcement agencies) must be more proactive, efficient and act faster.

"The thrust of this administration has always been good governance, getting rid of corruption and abuse of power," he said.

"There were two things that happened. Firstly, there were reports made to the police and the MACC on Bersatu's funds.

"Secondly, I was doing my job (as finance minister) and saw there were projects that cost too much and awarded without a tender. If there is no tender process, for example, because the cost is not high, then it is not an issue.

"But I found the costs to be too high and so, I shared the information from the ministry. What is being done by the MACC is not subject to my views.

"They are doing a thorough investigation and found over RM300 million in Bersatu's accounts. This must be explained.

"So, if the party leadership is really clean as they had claimed, they must explain this to the investigating bodies how they, in a short time, had amassed so much money, from which sources and from whom.

"It is not us (the government) punishing anyone," he said. **Additional reporting by Qistina Sallehuddin**