

PM TOUTS ANTI-GRAFT DRIVE IN NEW SESSION

Spotlight on large-scale anti-graft blitz, Sabah Watergate scandal

FOR the first time, a “Prime Minister’s Question Time” session was held in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday, with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim answering questions from his peers in Parliament.

The session has been practised in the United Kingdom for centuries, where it is officially known as “Questions for the Prime Minister”.

This is not a norm in Malaysia’s Parliament, though sitting prime ministers have answered questions posed by members of parliament (MPs) during the Ministers’ Question Time (MQT).

Currently, the questioning session for the prime minister will be held every Tuesday as a pilot test, in which three MPs will be allowed to ask questions. On the other hand, MQT will be set on Thursdays.

In yesterday’s inaugural session, Anwar put the spotlight on the government’s efforts to halt large-scale corruption.

To a question from Lo Su Fui (GRS-Tawau), Anwar said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) would focus on big cases to save taxpayers’ money.

He said the commission’s main focus was to carry out effective investigations and preventions, and increase the public’s confidence in the government’s efforts to curb corruption.

Highlighting some successes, Anwar said RM63 million worth of assets had been recovered from the RM3.3 billion 2016 Sabah watergate scandal as the case was still ongoing in court.

In addition, RM426 million was recovered from the Hiring Incentive Programme case through Ops Hire, he said.

He said a Bitcoin syndicate that stole electricity between 2018 and 2021 had been busted, as was a traffic summons syndicate that caused the government to suffer RM2.3 million in losses.

He said the government was also studying the law to enhance protection for whistleblowers.

Anwar said this was among his main focus now as there were many whistleblowers, including



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim answering questions during the inaugural ‘Questions for the Prime Minister’ session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. The session, which is a norm in the United Kingdom, has been set for every Tuesday.. BERNAMA PIC

civil servants, who might have felt insecure and unsafe to report such cases due to pressure.

He said there was also a view from the legal side to prevent false accusations or slander.

“So, as an effort to get facts and information, I agree with the call (for amendments) and we will table it at the next Parliament session at the latest,” he said in reply to Datuk Mas Ermeyati Samsudin (PN-Masjid Tanah).

As for people-centric measures, Anwar gave his assurance that the Goods and Services Tax or any broad-based consumption tax would not be introduced to avoid burdening the people.

The government would explore other ways to cut national expenditure and liability, which had hit RM1.5 trillion. One method could be the reduction of subsidies for the rich, like electricity tariff.

The Dewan Rakyat was also told of the removal of 197 contents on social media platforms last month due to unethical use, with most of it uploaded to TikTok.

Bankrupt individuals could also have an automatic discharge of their status after Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman said the Insolvency Department would explore the matter with priority for those above 70, and

people with disabilities or health issues.

Anwar also defended his decision to helm the finance minister’s post.

“Throughout our (nation’s) history... it has never been a problem (for a prime minister to helm the finance portfolio). The problem arises if the position is abused to steal the people’s money, and this was used by many of those from the ‘clean’ circles, whether from this side (the government) or that side (the opposition).

“However, those involved in corruption should be worried. No matter what, I am determined that the unity government administration will avoid corruption,” he said in response to a question from Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin (PN-Putrajaya) on whether the previous Barisan Nasional government had contributed to the nation’s debts and liability.

Anwar added that there was also a lot of damage done during Perikatan Nasional’s administration.

The Dewan Rakyat saw a lively debate on the royal address from MPs. Opposition leader Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin accused the government of a witch-hunt on his colleagues.

He said it was high time for the government to reconcile with the opposition so that it could play its role.