

No choice but to complete projects

By FATIMAH ZAINAL
fatimah@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: There are ongoing projects that the government has no other option but to complete as too much money has already been spent, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said this includes the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) project, for which the government had previously paid RM6bil for.

"There are ongoing projects that must be completed, including the LCS.

"We have no choice, we have spent RM6bil, so we can't close it, we must take over to finish the project," he told reporters after launching the Kuala Lumpur International Book Festival (KLIBF) 2023 at the World Trade Centre here yesterday.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, had been asked to respond to the statement by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan that the Finance Ministry has established a special purpose vehicle to take over the company responsible for the LCS construction project, Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd (BNS), as a subsidiary.

Anwar said a full statement on the matter will be issued soon.

The LCS project erupted in controversy in August last year after the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) revealed that no single ship has been completed although the government had paid BNS RM6.083bil.

Meanwhile, Mohamad had said the LCS project would be monitored by the Project Monitoring Committee jointly chaired by the Treasury secretary-general and the Defence Ministry secretary-general.

Mohamad also said the PAC is welcome to monitor the progress of the ship construction, adding



Books galore:
Anwar visiting the exhibition after launching the KLIBF 2023 at the World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.
- Bernama

the committee would receive reports based on their schedule and could take a look and report to Parliament if they were unsatisfied.

In another development, Anwar stood by his claims that Perikatan Nasional had used gambling money to fund its 2022 election campaign, saying that he would not have uttered such a remark if it was baseless.

Anwar also said Perikatan is welcome to take legal action over his statement but invited them to interpret it fully.

"Read the statement in full, then only take action, but if he wants to take it, go ahead," he said, referring to Perikatan chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"I would not have made the statement if I didn't have the basis," he added.

Anwar said investigations into the allegations that the coalition received funds from gaming companies are ongoing.

"Of course. There are many agencies (involved) and only further action can be taken when there is proof. Let the agencies do the explaining," he said.

On Friday, Muhyiddin said the

coalition would discuss with its lawyers the next course of action over the statements made by Anwar and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

This is after Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reforms) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said on Thursday that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) did not open investigation papers against Perikatan following the claims that it had used gambling proceeds in the last general election.

"The MACC found the information too general, and no parties could confirm the issue. So, no investigation papers were open," she said in a parliamentary written reply to a question from Ahmad Fadhi Shaari (PN-Pasir Mas) on Thursday.

When asked if he would file a defamation lawsuit, Muhyiddin said they would first demand an apology.

In December last year, it was reported that Anwar had implied that Perikatan's funds for its election campaign partly came from gambling, particularly 4D lottery.

Ahmad Zahid later asserted the claim.

Meanwhile, in his speech during the launch of the KLIBF 2023, Anwar implored the youth to cultivate a new tradition of seeking knowledge through extensive reading and understanding of various disciplines.

He said that the country would not be progressive without the values and willingness of the youth to do this.

"I also urge all educators and parents to foster a culture of reading in children from a young age," he said.

Anwar added that China, a special guest at the KLIBF 2023, was a prime example of a country with a strong reading culture.

"The Chinese culture is famous for its big literary works, and the country raised its civilisation to become an economic giant because of its priority in reading," he said.