

PM to explain Zahid's case in Parliament

An update on efforts to separate the roles of AG and PP is also anticipated

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is expected to explain to Parliament the outcome of the graft case involving Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today.

“God willing, the Prime Minister will be in the Dewan Rakyat tomorrow (today) to answer questions between 2.30pm and 3pm,” Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Opposition chief Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan had earlier made claims of selective prosecution and wanted an update on efforts to separate the roles of the Attorney General (AG) and Public Prosecutor (PP).

Takiyuddin, who is the Perikatan Nasional MP for Kota Bara, had asked whether the Prime Minister would be in Parliament to explain the discharge not amounting to an acquittal (DNAA) granted to Ahmad Zahid by the High Court.

On Sept 4, the court granted a DNAA to Ahmad Zahid over 47 charges of graft over funds from the Akal Budi foundation.

The court’s decision came after the Attorney General’s Chambers (AGC) had applied to grant Ahmad Zahid a DNAA based on 11 reasons that included the necessity for more thorough investigations into the charges.

The AGC’s decision to apply for a DNAA had upset supporters of the government and civil society groups such as the Bar Council and Lawyers for Liberty.

Opposition parties have alleged that it smacked of political pressure on the AGC.

Anwar has repeatedly refuted these allegations, saying he does not interfere in the AGC’s operations or decisions.

The court decision had also intensified

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Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said

calls for the government to expedite its plan to separate the roles of the AG and PP so as to increase the independence of criminal prosecutions.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, Azalina said the administration was committed to separating the offices of the AG and PP as part of its agenda for institutional reforms.

She said that two special bipartisan task forces have been formed to study and expedite the matter, and it may take between one year and two years to finalise the amendments to the Federal Constitution.

Azalina said such an initiative required political stability and support from the Opposition.

“(The question of) whether the separation is mandatory has to be brought to Parliament because it is Parliament that decides whether there are to be amendments to the Federal Constitution.

“It is us as MPs who decide on the direc-



All eyes on PM: Anwar attending a Dewan Rakyat session. Also seen is Azalina (seated behind him). - Bernama

tion and system of justice in the country,” said Azalina during ministerial replies on issues raised during debates on the 12th Malaysia Plan mid-term review.

Azalina, who is in charge of law and institutional reforms, said that 148 or two-thirds out of 222 votes in Parliament were needed to amend the Constitution to enable this reform.

“But if we can’t even cross 148, how am I going to carry out institutional reforms?”

“What I am to do when all of a sudden this number decreases to 147 if MPs are courted by either side the following day?”

“How are we to carry out institutional reforms if Parliament is not stable and the government cannot amend the Constitution?” she said.

She then asked Opposition MPs whether they would support the amendments that would be necessary for separating the roles of AG and PP.

“This Madani government is committed towards good governance which is fair. That is why this, government’s hashtag is ‘we walk the talk’ and not the hashtag ‘we don’t talk and we don’t walk,’ Azalina said, drawing laughter from backbenchers.