

# Give Zakir Naik issue a rest, says PM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called for a temporary “break” on the uproar surrounding Dr Zakir Naik, the controversial preacher from India.

In an interview with *India Today Global*, he said the issues involving Dr Zakir were not raised during his recent visit to India, and he expressed Malaysia’s appreciation of concerns raised by its counterpart.

He said the issues surrounding Dr Zakir should not be a concern for now as long as the preacher did not create any issues between the two countries, particularly involving security.

“We have to respect due process... he has not been active in Malaysia. He travels outside and comes back to Malaysia from time to time, (but) he is not issuing statements or political statements that are against India or Malaysia.

“I think for a number of reasons, let the matter rest for a while.”

Anwar also rejected the idea that the controversy surrounding Dr Zakir would impact bilateral ties between the two countries.

Earlier, Anwar was quoted as saying by Uttar Pradesh-based *India Today* that Malaysia would consider India’s request to extradite Dr Zakir if evidence of his extremism was provided.

Dr Zakir had evaded Indian authorities since 2016, and was accused of hate speech and money laundering after a deadly attack in Dhaka. India formally requested his extradition in 2019. He is believed to be residing in Putrajaya under asylum since 2018.

He was accused of undermining religious harmony and in July 2019, then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed acknowledged Malaysia’s multiracial society could not tolerate extreme views, but noted difficulties in

deporting Dr Zakir, as many countries refused to accept him.

By August 2019, Malaysian authorities banned Dr Zakir from speaking publicly to preserve racial harmony.

Anwar also said Malaysia would support the research and development by India on palm oil production.

He said Malaysia was lucky that India had independent and professional views compared with negative reactions from the European Union and the United States towards palm oil products.

He also said that the country’s desire to join BRICS had received support from all the group’s current members.

However, he said they had not decided whether to make Malaysia a full member or member-partner.

Anwar said he remained optimistic that a decision would be made in the next few months.