

FIXED-TERM PARLIAMENT BILL 'NOT A PRIORITY'

Anwar says cabinet has not discussed it and matter is too premature to decide

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INTRODUCING legislation for a fixed-term Parliament in the country is not a priority for the government at the moment, said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The prime minister said the cabinet had yet to hold any discussion on the proposal put forward by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"We have not discussed this and it is too premature for us to come to any decision on the matter," he said after the launch of the "AI Untuk Rakyat" programme here yesterday.

"We have not even obtained any comment from the attorney-general.

"In addition, there is no consensus among the leaders of parties aligned with the unity government on the proposal.

"I think we have to wait for due process. However, there have been suggestions and we will look into them. Having said that, the matter is not a priority."

Anwar was asked to comment on the proposal by Zahid for a bill to be drafted to ensure that a government complete its five-year term.

Zahid was quoted as saying that the bill was to prevent political instability and any attempt to topple a ruling government before the end of its term.

Asked if the federal administration should push for a law to ensure the government could serve a full term of five years, Anwar replied: "We will study this. To me, however, this is not a priority. We will go through the process.

"The problem is because of the perceived attempt by the opposition (to topple the government), which to me has no basis whatsoever. They (the opposition) are very weak.

"They can't even muster one-third of the votes (one-third



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking at the launch of the 'AI Untuk Rakyat' programme at Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, yesterday. PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

majority in the Dewan Rakyat.)"

Anwar said the opposition's psychological warfare of "having the numbers" to topple the government showed that the opposition political coalition was desperate to come to power.

This followed confirmation by Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul, who recently said the opposition had yet to submit a motion of no confidence against the prime minister.

"I do not think they are serious about it. All these claims by the opposition (of having sufficient numbers to come to power) shows that they are desperate.

"Even when I was asked about the so-called 'Dubai Move', I refused to comment on the matter.

"To me, there is no basis to their claims (of having the numbers to topple the government)."

Anwar was commenting on the opposition's non-committal stance to his challenge to bring a vote of no confidence in the Dewan Rakyat if the opposition wished to overthrow the government. Anwar had previously said the unity government had presented an opportunity for a vote of no confidence, but the opposition did not take it up.

The opposition, said Johari, could submit such a motion to be included even though the first session of the third term would begin only next month.

The First Meeting of the Third Session of the 15th Parliament

will begin with an official opening on Feb 26 and is set to be graced by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, followed by the Royal Address.

In **Seberang Jaya**, DAP secretary-general Anthony Loke said the party supported Zahid's suggestion for the introduction of a fixed-term Parliament bill.

He said, in principle, the bill was a good idea as it would reduce problems or political issues during parliamentary terms. He, however, said in terms of implementation, it needed to be examined thoroughly.

"This parliamentary system was implemented in the United Kingdom previously for a fixed five-year term. This means Parliament cannot be arbitrarily dissolved by the prime minister before the government's term ends.

"Any decision to dissolve Parliament before the end of the term must be brought to Parliament to be decided by the members of parliament.

"Nevertheless, the matter is still being studied by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said," he said when asked on the party's stand on Zahid's proposal.

Loke, who is transport minister, expressed confidence that Azalina would raise the matter with the cabinet before any decision was made.