

'PROBING PROMINENT FIGURES NOT EASY'

PM urges people to support govt's anti-graft efforts, instead of saying he is too harsh

NOR AIN MOHAMED RADHI AND
SHAHRIN AIZAT NOORSHAHIZAM
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says conducting corruption investigations into high-profile figures, including those with Tun titles, is not easy.

He said the public should support the government's efforts to investigate prominent people, which will prevent them from abusing their power.

"We will go after the crooks, I don't care.

"When we want to take action, the people get angry, saying that this prime minister is too harsh. This is strange. You should support it. It's not easy to investigate a Tun.

"Investigating a village head is easy, investigating a school teacher is easier. I want the big shots who steal big money to be investigated. Do you think it's easy?"

"It's not. We want to protect the country and not let them steal people's wealth."

He told this to 1,000 people at the National Ponggal Festival at the Klang Municipal Council Square @ Padang Chetty here on Saturday.

He said the government's efforts to eradicate hardcore poverty was ongoing, reiterating a promise he made when assuming office.

"I have never forgotten my promise and will never. Now is the time to realise those promises."

Anwar's remarks on battling corruption come in the wake of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) probes into the sources of wealth of a few influential figures.

On Jan 17, the MACC confirmed that it had taken statements from Mirzan Mahathir, the son of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, over the former's business dealings in the late 1990s.

Mirzan was served a notice to declare his assets within and outside the country in 30 days. This was based on information re-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim greeting people at the National Ponggal Festival in Klang on Saturday. Anwar says he wants to protect the country and not let crooks steal the people's wealth.
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vealed in the Panama Papers and the Pandora Papers.

Dr Mahathir had claimed it was "selective investigation" and that Mirzan was threatened by MACC officers that he could be jailed for five years.

Prior to that, Tun Daim Zainuddin's wife, Toh Puan Nai'mah Abdul Khalid, and their two children were summoned to the MACC headquarters to assist in an investigation believed to be related to the former finance minister and businessman.

In December, the MACC seized Menara Ilham in Kuala Lumpur, believed to be in connection with the misappropriation of more than RM2.3 billion in state funds, implicating a corporate figure and a former senior minister.

Non-governmental organisations said the authorities must continue to fight corruption, including probing powerful people.

Transparency International Malaysia president Dr Muhammad Mohan said no matter how difficult the task was, the probes must continue and that it was crucial to ensure the investigations were done fairly.

He said this was not the first time powerful people were investigated, citing former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak as an example.

He said it would be odd for the people not to support the government's fight against corruption.

"Any right-thinking Malaysian will support the government, provided they (investigations)

are fair. Do not victimise the person, which I strongly believe the government did not do."

Malaysian Corruption Watch president Jais Abdul Karim said investigating prominent figures was crucial to upholding justice and ensuring accountability.

"Despite challenges, it is the right move for the government to continue pursuing these cases to maintain the integrity of anti-corruption efforts.

"We would like to emphasise the importance of consistent and impartial investigations, aligning with the principle that justice should be blind to position or wealth.

"Maintaining the public's trust requires active efforts in pursuing cases at all levels, without creating the impression of selective enforcement.

"Continuous investigations send a powerful message about the government's commitment to fighting corruption."

He said it was crucial for the government to be transparent.

"Regular updates from the government or the MACC are vital.

"Transparent communication fosters trust, assures the public of the government's commitment and enhances accountability in the fight against corruption.

"It allows the public to stay informed about the progress and measures taken in addressing issues. A well-informed public can make more meaningful contributions to the fight against corruption."