

Anwar: Don't go overboard in debating BlackRock issue

PUTRAJAYA: Any polemics related to the BlackRock issue linked to the Israeli regime could affect Malaysia's interests as a developing country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Speaking at the July monthly assembly of the Prime Minister's Department yesterday, he reminded everyone not to be excessive in discussing the polemics of the BlackRock issue.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the presence of the giant investment company in Malaysia all this while had not hindered Malaysia from voicing out against the Israeli regime's atrocities against the people of Gaza.

"History shows that compared with other countries, we (Malaysia) are among the clearest and firmest (in voicing out against Israel). Don't demand more than that. We are a developing country, look at our level of capability. Don't let a strong desire to show off undermine the country's interests. That is our principle in general.

"And the cruelty Israel committed against Palestine is very clear, no one is disputing it. (But) if there is a company like Microsoft or Google showing sympathy towards Israel, we will oppose it. (However), do you think we should close all paths and cooperation with them?"

It was reported that data reviews showed that BlackRock has interests and shareholdings worth RM24.7 billion in firms listed on Bursa Malaysia and RM7.9 billion in Malaysian government and corporate bonds.

As of May, the global investment firm held equity investments in 100 listed companies in Malaysia across all industrial sectors, including three banking institutions in the country.

Regarding the collaboration between Khazanah Nasional Berhad (Khazanah) and EPF with Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) concerning interests in Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB), Anwar said the collaboration between EPF and GIP has been ongoing since 2012.

"That is why Khazanah and EPF are negotiating with GIP. Our airports have their strengths and advantages, but compared with other major airports, there are many weaknesses, especially in terms of engineering, technical expertise and management.

"There are areas that need improvement because we are somewhat behind, in planning and various other aspects. Khazanah and EPF's decision was then communicated to me and I said to proceed."

Previously, Anwar said the sale of a stake in MAHB to GIP had gone through stringent conditions and one of the merits of its selection was the company's agreement to retain the appointment of Malaysians as the chairman and CEO of MAHB and the collective ownership of the majority shares by the state.

Anwar said apart from GIP, other parties did not agree with the conditions set by Khazanah and EPF.

GIP is a leading infrastructure investor managing assets worth US\$112 billion (RM527.92 billion) on behalf of its investors, which include approximately 500 investment institutions worldwide.

In January, it was announced that GIP is being acquired by BlackRock, with the transaction expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2024. BlackRock has not in any way been involved in the transaction relating to MAHB. - Bernama