

Bloomberg reps quizzed over allegations against PM

> Anwar leaving it to cops, AG to act against news agency on claims that he had interfered in MACC investigations

KUALA LUMPUR: Police have taken the necessary actions, including summoning Bloomberg representatives to have their statements recorded, over allegations that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had interfered in Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) investigations, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Anwar said he is leaving it to the police to investigate, and the attorney-general (AG) to take appropriate action.

"Legal action is being considered as the police have received a report and have taken several actions, including summoning Bloomberg representatives and individuals involved on Oct 1, 8 and 11. We will wait for them to submit their papers (to the AG's Chambers). If there is a clear offence, we will leave it to the AG to press charges.

"MACC has also made a strong statement denying the accusations, as what happened was merely a general directive I issued, including in Parliament, where I emphasised that I want MACC, the Inland Revenue Board, police and other enforcement agencies to act decisively and uncompromisingly in combating

corruption," Anwar said in the Dewan Rakyat.

He was replying to Ahmad Fadhli Shaari (PN-Pasir Mas), who wanted to know if the government is prepared to take legal action against the international financial news agency over its report alleging Anwar had interfered in MACC investigations to the extent that it had tarnished his image in the fight against power abuse and corruption.

In September, Bloomberg published a report quoting three unnamed sources alleging that Anwar had directed MACC not to investigate a stock purchase involving his former political secretary Datuk Farhash Wafa Salvador Rizal Mubarak.

In response to a supplementary question from Ahmad Fadhli regarding the government's seriousness in taking legal action against Bloomberg as the prime minister had spoken at a conference organised by the news agency, Anwar said he attended the conference to honour the principle of media freedom.

"Why do I continue to have a relationship with Bloomberg? It is a well-known international media agency, and when the Qatari government wanted to have me as the

keynote speaker at a conference organised by Bloomberg, we set it (the issue) aside because we respect the principle of free media.

"If it was found to be slander, we will sue. The police have also taken specific action regarding that issue, but it doesn't mean we should ban or cancel all events with Bloomberg, and that principle should apply to all."

Anwar was one of the global leaders invited to speak at a forum organised by Bloomberg in Qatar in May, Bernama reported.

Meanwhile, in reply to Lee Chuan How (PH-Ipoh Timor), on efforts to mobilise local and international media to ensure that they report responsibly, Anwar said the media should use its freedom wisely to prevent chaos and disorder.

"While we respect the principle of freedom, we must remember that total freedom for the wolves has often meant death to the sheep.

"When a police officer takes a bribe of RM3,000, no one defends him but when a wealthy tycoon amasses billions, many defend him. This is what I mean by total freedom for the wolves.

"So, we must now ensure that this freedom is not used to defend oppression, corruption and misconduct. We must ensure that our country maintains harmony. This is not a law I made, but it is something we have upheld since our country obtained independence," he added.