

No deferral sought for ex-PM

MACC not after prosecution agreement in Ismail Sabri's case

By **STEPHANIE LEE**
and **SANDRA SOKIAL**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: Former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob is not currently being considered for a deferred prosecution agreement (DPA) by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said there is no need to explore the option for Ismail Sabri, who is being investigated for alleged corruption and money laundering involving expenditure and procurement of funds during his tenure.

These funds were allegedly for the promotion of the Keluarga Malaysia programme when he was the prime minister from August 2021 to November 2022.

Azam made the remarks after a dialogue session with media practitioners in Sabah.

He explained that DPA - an option under consideration in certain cases - can help expedite resolutions by allowing accused parties to return misappropriated funds or pay fines, avoiding prolonged court proceedings that may not yield timely outcomes.

However, when asked specifically if this approach would apply to Ismail Sabri's case, Azam responded: "As for now, no."



On the case: Azam speaking during a recent press conference at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya. — AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

He also noted that each case must be evaluated on its own merits, pointing out that legal frameworks and circumstances differ over time, making direct comparisons with past cases inappropriate.

Azam said many developed countries have begun implementing DPA to recover public funds while allowing organisations to resume operations after fulfilling stringent conditions.

"In our pursuit of justice, which can sometimes take years to conclude through prosecution and trial, we must also consider effective ways to recover misused funds for the nation," he said.

Earlier, Azam revealed that the

MACC recorded a total seizure amounting to RM483,386,441 in the first three months of this year, with the highest amount linked to the case involving Ismail Sabri.

"This case marks the largest single seizure so far - RM177mil," he said.

On another matter, Azam said Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor has provided his statement for the investigation into alleged corruption involving mineral licensing in the state.

However, he clarified that Hajiji is not involved in the case, which implicates eight assemblymen and the state assembly speaker.

Azam also dismissed any claims of interference by the state gov-

ernment in their probe into a businessman's claim of paying bribes to the assemblymen for mining licences.

He said neither the Sabah Chief Minister nor the state speaker had inquired about the investigation.

As for the businessman who claimed to be a whistleblower, Azam said he will be summoned again to give statements and to provide more documents.

He said this businessman is not classified as a whistleblower, as he had never lodged a formal report with the MACC regarding the videos shared.

On the end of his term as chief commissioner next month, Azam said he would respect any decision made by the government regarding his position.

"I am someone who will accept any decision made by the government.

"My appointment was made by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the advice of the Prime Minister, as provided under Section 5 of the MACC Act 2009.

"So, as a government officer, I simply follow orders."

If confirmed, this would mark the third extension for Azam, who has already surpassed the mandatory retirement age of 60.

He was previously granted two one-year extensions.