

'JUDGES' EXTENSION NOT AUTOMATIC'

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No interference in judicial matters, govt respects the constitutional process, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he has never interfered in judicial matters, including the appointment of judges, amid calls for the extension of the chief justice's tenure.

"When someone retires, their service is not automatically extended," he said at the Prime Minister's Department's monthly assembly yesterday.

"Some asked if this is the prime minister's decision. But if one understands the Constitution, they would know the process.

"Look at the recent appointments. They go to the king, then are presented for discussion with the Conference of Rulers. All these procedures must be followed."

Several parties, including former Malaysian Bar president Christopher Leong and Bukit Gelugor member of parliament Ramkarpal Singh, have called for the extension of Tun Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat's tenure as chief justice, which ends today.

Anwar said he was committed to judicial independence.

He said the appointment of



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says when an institution that is supposed to uphold integrity and independence becomes politicised, it loses its credibility. NSTP PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

judges, which follows a strict constitutional process, should not be politicised to undermine the integrity of the institution.

"When an institution that is supposed to uphold integrity and independence becomes politicised this way, it loses its credibility.

"So when one case is extended, it is labelled a betrayal, and when another is not, that too is called betrayal."

Anwar said he had avoided interactions with senior judges, except for Tengku Maimun, and even then, these meetings were only for official purposes.

"I have heard the issues that have been raised. But in all those meetings, I have never interfered in judicial matters.

"Whatever decision they make is entirely theirs. I have never intervened. Yet even that has been politicised."

On recent court rulings grant-

ing discharge not amounting to acquittal (DNAA), Anwar said there was a tendency among the public to judge judicial outcomes based on their political leanings.

"In these two cases, I noticed people have differing views. They support the DNAA in one case, but oppose it in another.

"We must understand that there must be wisdom and careful consideration and there is an independent judiciary in place.

"It is not my business. Whether I agree or not, my personal opinion is not the issue. We must respect the judges and the decisions they make."

Anwar said he did not want a repeat of the legal persecution he faced in the past.

"We must remember to uphold the system, not according to political preferences, not based on group interests and not under lobbying pressure."