

Judicial picks expected today

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Conference of Rulers will decide on appointments, says Anwar

PUTRAJAYA: An announcement regarding judicial appointments is expected today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said.

He acknowledged delays and public unease over certain appointments but assured them all processes have been carried out fairly and transparently.

Anwar said he had a lengthy discussion with the Conference of Rulers yesterday morning.

"I think let them decide and tomorrow (today), hopefully, there will be an announcement that will clearly dispel the so-called negative perceptions," he said in his speech at Malaysia's International Conference on Integrity and Governance here yesterday.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, stressed that the govern-

ment fully upholds judicial independence and has not interfered in any court proceedings or decisions during his tenure.

"I rest my case, and I hope when the announcement is made, it will prove this government is committed to reform, including the principle of judicial independence," he said, as reported by Bernama.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said noted that the government will review the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) Act 2009 amid public confusion over the recent Chief Justice appointment process.

She said a special committee

will be set up, comprising members of the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara, as well as constitutional experts, legal practitioners and academics.

"We have to improve because what is happening now is that there is a lot of confusion. (There's) no clarity from the public perspective. But then this particular JAC, which was passed and established in 2009, is responsible for the appointment of five Chief Justices. It has never been an issue.

"Sadly, now there is an issue, so we have to study it. Where did the non-clarity or confusion come in? Is it the processes, or is it the wording of the Act?" she said to reporters after attending the International Conference on

Integrity and Governance here yesterday.

She said the government had announced the implementation of a Comparative Study of the Judicial Appointment System by the Legal Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department last week, as part of efforts to enhance transparency in the appointment procedure of superior court judges.

She said the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of the JAC's role and to also address issues raised by the Malaysian Bar.

"The government is always open to the views of all parties, including the Malaysian Bar, who will also be invited to join in this study, to ensure a more transpar-

ent, integrity-based and trusted judicial appointment system for the people.

"In addition, issues raised by the Malaysian Bar should be considered within the framework of the Federal Constitution, the Judicial Appointments Commission Act and other laws in force," she said in a statement.

On Monday, Azalina clarified that the JAC does not have binding authority in judicial appointments.

She explained the JAC's primary role is to screen, assess and recommend candidates to the Prime Minister, while appointments to the Federal Court, Court of Appeal and High Court must ultimately comply with Article 122B of the Federal Constitution.