

PM: GOVT HAS NEVER MEDDLED IN JUDICIARY

We must ensure judges are competent and free from graft, says Anwar

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he has never interfered in the judiciary and will never do so, reaffirming his government's commitment to judicial independence.

"There is absolutely no interference in judicial decisions. None at all. Not once have I spoken to judges, the chief justice or any member of the judiciary regarding any case.

"To me, this marks a significant departure from past practices. This is important. We do not interfere.

"While there are other processes we discuss, we must remember that neither the prime minister nor judges, including the chief justice, are infallible," he said in his speech at DAP's 18th National Congress.

Anwar said the government must ensure judicial appointees are competent, independent and free from business interests and corruption.

"This is our responsibility in government because we must an-

swer to Parliament and the people.

"We cannot remain silent or avoid scrutiny, as those who are accountable are the prime minister and the cabinet," he said.

He said there must be independent bodies to ensure accountability in the judiciary.

"There must be oversight and checks and balances.

"There must be bodies to ensure taxes are paid and whether there is corruption, because such issues had occurred in the judiciary in the past.

"If you ask me, every reform must be carried out cautiously, but the most important thing is that we begin the process."

He also hit out at parties stoking racial sentiments.

He labelled such tactics outdated and a "desperado" approach to politics.

"There is no basis, no policy critiques and no new proposals. Instead, they keep repeating the same rhetoric, instilling fear in Malays about the so-called rise of the Chinese, especially under the DAP symbol," he said.

He criticised this approach of playing up racial sentiments instead of debating government policies.

"There is no scandal involving the country's leadership... (no cases of) corruption or abuse of power.

"What we see is the manipulation of racial issues, with claims that this government is weak because it supposedly bows to the influence of certain parties. That is the only narrative they push."

He said no country has ever de-

veloped while its people of various races and religions feud with each other.

He said no revolution in history had succeeded if its leadership was reckless.

"There is no country in the world that can develop and be stable if there is continuous conflict between races and religions.

"This country cannot follow the path of other nations with diverse populations, where racial and religious conflicts persist, hindering progress and stability.

"We have a choice: to be racial 'heroes', to promote chauvinistic views, to uphold racial and religious fanaticism, or to work towards saving the country and building our nation," he said.

He said the focus of the government, which included DAP, was on strengthening the country's institutions, governance and democratic accountability.

"DAP emerged as a strong and outspoken force, despite enduring oppressive and draconian laws.

"They championed democratic accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption among political leaders of the time.

"I salute them for fostering mass education, particularly among young Malaysians, about governance.

"I thank DAP members for making their choice, just as we in PKR, Amanah, and now United Progressive Kinabalu Organisation have done, along with our allies in Umno, GPS (Gabungan Parti Sarawak) and GRS (Gabungan Rakyat Sabah)," he said.