



A screengrab of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's interview with Mary Ann Jolley (not pictured) on Al-Jazeera's '101 East' on Thursday.

'CORRUPTION RUNS DEEPER'

'NAJIB NOT ONLY ONE WHO STOLE BILLIONS'

1MDB just one of many scandals involving former leaders, PM says in Al-Jazeera interview

KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) scandal involving jailed ex-prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak may be just one of many cases in which billions were stolen by former leaders.

The prime minister said while public attention has largely focused on Najib and 1MDB, the issue of corruption runs deeper, involving other former prime ministers and finance ministers.

"I was one of the strong proponents against the 1MDB scandal and stressed that the truth must be uncovered, but I also know billions were stolen by many other leaders," he said in an interview.

"1MDB — one major case — is ongoing... but these people have been obsessed with only Najib and 1MDB. This obsession I do not share.

"If you listen to them, the only problem in Malaysia is Najib and the 1MDB scandal. I'm telling you, yes, it's part of the scandal.

"It was not just Najib — it was prime ministers before him, finance ministers before him and after him. Go after them. Why protect some? Why have this obsession?" he said during an interview on Al-Jazeera's *101 East*.

When interviewer Mary Ann Jolley interjected that 1MDB was the "biggest case of kleptocracy", Anwar said the assessment was based only on what she knew.

"Now that I am prime minister, I have more information. I know quite a bit more, and I'm saying yes, 1MDB was a major financial scandal — but there are many other billions stolen that must be resolved," he said.

When pressed on the other cases, Anwar said investigations were ongoing and criticised those spoke out against Najib but remained silent about others.

"The point I'm trying to raise is that the critics of Najib appear to be completely muted when it involves past leaders who have squandered billions.

"My point is go (against the offenders)... I want this country to save itself from corrupt leaders and teach the corrupt a lesson. At least take back the funds and bring it back to serve the people."

Anwar also reiterated that he had taken Najib's royal pardon request to the Pardons Board because as prime minister, he could not display prejudice.

On another matter, he said bringing fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low, back to Malaysia to face justice would ruffle some feathers.

He said certain quarters might not be keen to have Low, wanted for the 1MDB scandal, back on Malaysian shores.

"... the fact that his (Low) return would probably expose more. I do not want to be distracted to consider this as the only issue that prime minister Anwar has to deal with.

"Anwar has to deal with the is-

sue of governance and rid this country of systemic corruption... it is an arduous battle and it does not start and end with 1MDB."

On Low's whereabouts, Anwar said authorities were trying their best to locate him and one of the first things he did as prime minister was to call up all the enforcement agencies to do whatever they could to track him.

"I think he is quite instrumental and his testimony will be pivotal in actually closing... putting an end to this case (1MDB)."

On the complicated process to bring Low back despite mounting evidence against him and whether he is in China, Anwar replied: "No one knows his whereabouts.

"We cannot establish if he is in China. I mean, seriously on record... but we suspect some movements. If I say more, there will be more complications."

Last year, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Razarudin Husain said police were tracking down Low, but there were no leads on his whereabouts.

In May 2023, Anwar said negotiations were ongoing to bring Low back to Malaysia, but added that the process was complicated, involving multiple countries, intelligence services and Interpol.

On another matter, the prime minister said Cambodian domestic worker Nuon Toeun was deported last year following a request by that country's authorities, who had submitted all the relevant evidence to Malaysia.

He said the Malaysian authorities had been convinced by the case, allegedly over a social media post criticising Cambodia's former leader, before deciding to send Toeun home.