

PM: No escape for the corrupt

No one is too big to be exempt from action, says Anwar

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PUTRAJAYA: No one, no matter how high their position, should be spared if they are found to be corrupt, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has the green light to take action not only against the small fish but also against the big fishes.

"It is not right to not act against those who are corrupt just because they were once meritorious, as even pharaohs can be regarded as having done much for their people.

"I am not likening anyone to the pharaohs but what I am saying is everyone can be regarded as having done something good - even the cleaner," he said.

He was speaking during the launch of the Keep Malaysia Clean (KMC) programme held in conjunction with the 58th anniversary of MACC here yesterday.

MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki and all of MACC officers and personnel were present.

Anwar revealed that when he was deputy prime minister in the 90s, he was tasked with looking into anti-corruption laws but had faced backlash from a few Cabinet members as the provisions he proposed were deemed "too radical".

"The provisions at that time stated that authorities could still take action if a civil servant or a leader was found to be corrupt,



To a cleaner nation: Anwar launching the 58th anniversary celebration of MACC in Putrajaya. With him are (from left) Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Armizan Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar, Azam and Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir. — LOW BOON TAT/The Star

even five or 10 years after leaving office.

"I then received instructions from the prime minister who was abroad at the time, saying there were Cabinet members against it.

"I was surprised they had not opposed it during the Cabinet meeting but had confided in the prime minister.

"So, I had to present it again and I said then that if we were not corrupt, we would not have to worry.

"We then passed it with some amendments," said Anwar.

Integrity, Anwar said, was very important.

"We can talk about anti-corruption but it must always start from ourselves and our own people.

"I applaud MACC's bravery in taking action against leaders of the country (who are corrupt).

"Even the best of countries will not last if the system is endemic with corruption," said Anwar.

He said many forget that the country's independence was attained by former prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman after

the masses had donated their own jewellery for funds.

"The later generations of leaders must not forget the sacrifice of the masses."

The Prime Minister also said that there has been a request from MACC for higher allocation in the next Budget.

Earlier, Azam said the culture of corruption has to be eradicated with the collaboration of all authorities, as MACC cannot work in isolation.

"Corruption is a chronic disease - like cancer - which, if left untreated, will destroy the nation."

Over the past few years, he said, MACC collected RM28bil in recovery of assets in corruption cases.

"This success did not come from MACC alone but through strong collaboration with the police, Customs, Inland Revenue Board, Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry, Attorney General's Chambers, as well as international partners," said Azam.

He also said the government had agreed in principle to introduce file legal framework for a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA), which may be passed next year.

"The DPA, long practised in countries like the United States and United Kingdom, will allow the government to accelerate asset recovery, reduce public fund losses due to abuse of power and improve the effectiveness of corporate corruption prosecutions," said Azam.