



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim looking at female giant panda Xiao Yue after the opening of the Giant Panda Conservation Centre at Zoo Negara in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

FIGHT AGAINST GRAFT

PM: WE WON'T BACK DOWN FROM BIG FISH

Corruption in Malaysia systemic, requires sustained action, says Anwar

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THE government will not shy away from pursuing "big fish" as it presses ahead with institutional

reforms, including an intensified anti-corruption drive, despite criticism and political pushback. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the cabinet and the entire government machinery were under scrutiny to ensure effective enforcement, noting that corruption in Malaysia was "systemic" and required sustained action.

"If you compare the enforcement level in the past few years with the current level, it is quite commendable.

"We have gone after big fish, including former prime ministers and former ministers. I am not totally satisfied, but the level of enforcement today is commendable."

He said this after attending the

opening of the Giant Panda Conservation Centre at Zoo Negara.

He was responding to a question on controversies involving the military, including procurement issues and internal culture, and whether there was a need for reforms in the service.

Anwar, who is finance minister, said reforms in any institution required cooperation with enforcement agencies to ensure their effectiveness.

"But, as I have said before, corruption is not only endemic, but systemic. It takes a lot of effort. I must commend enforcement agencies, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, Inland Revenue Board, Immigration Department and others.

"Despite their success, we still have major issues at hand. You also realise that among political leaders, including those in the opposition, there has not been much support."

Anwar said the government was intensifying efforts, but some quarters still questioned enforcement actions, particularly when prominent people were involved.

"In fact, every time we touch an important leader or a tycoon, there are voices questioning these decisions. But our resolve is clear. We will continue to pursue this."

He did not name the people who questioned the government for going after "big fish".

It was reported that former army

chief General Tan Sri Muhammad Hafizuddeain Jantan and his two wives were among five people arrested by MACC over alleged irregularities linked to army procurement tenders. All five have been remanded.

Under the probe, investigators yesterday seized 23 Rolex watches and other luxury items worth RM2.2 million from the home of Hafizuddeain's second wife.

The items were discovered in two suitcases during a raid at the home on the east coast, a source said.

The 23 Rolex watches are worth about RM2 million, the source said.

MACC investigators also seized jewellery worth RM225,000 belonging to a person suspected of being an accomplice.

On Friday, MACC seized cash in foreign currencies, gold bars and a high-performance sport utility vehicle (SUV) worth about RM6.9 million.

"Among the items seized were three 999 gold bars, each weighing 1kg, worth about RM1.8 million.

"Also seized were nine gold bars weighing 100g each, valued at more than RM500,000, as well as a high-performance SUV worth about RM360,000, believed to have been bought in cash."

On Jan 6, 17 company directors were remanded on suspicion of being part of a procurement cartel involving the army.