

Ombudsman's job scope being studied, says Azalina

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is scrutinising several scopes of duties before establishing an independent ombudsman body, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Minister in Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman said three engagement sessions had been done with related parties to allow the investigative body to act independently.

"Three engagement sessions have been conducted separately with non-governmental organisations, public service agencies and members of parliament.

"While most parties have no qualms about the establishment of Ombudsman Malaysia in principle, several matters must be addressed, particularly the scope and function of the body.

"This is because some scopes were similar and redundant with other monitoring agencies, such as the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission," she said during the winding-up debate on the 12th Malaysia Plan midterm review.

In 2019, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Pakatan Harapan government introduced the Ombudsman Malaysia law as part of its reform agenda.

Under Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's government, former minister in the Prime Minister's Department (parliament and law) Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan said the government had submitted the bill for review and approval of the Attorney-General's Chambers before being tabled in Parliament.

In 2021, former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the Ombudsman bill was in its final stages of drafting and was expected to be tabled in Parliament in 2022.

Azalina said the government was also finalising amendments to the Whistleblower Protection Act, in line with the National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019-2023.

"The government aims to finalise and present the proposed amendment by November."

The government in May announced that it was mulling establishing a single agency to oversee whistleblowing matters