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Anwar-Sermon

ANWAR ADVISES PAS-LED KELANTAN GOVT TO MEND ITS WAYS

BUKIT MERTAJAM, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today advised the Pas-led Kelantan government to mend its ways and refrain from using mosques and sermons to run down others, especially those opposed to it.

He said the Kelantan government should adopt a moderate approach and use sermons as a forum to promote unity among the ummah.

Sermons were not meant to incite confrontation or be used to vent anger but as a means to revitalise the ummah in building greater unity, he told reporters at his Hari Raya open house at the family residence in Cherok Tok Kun here.

Anwar said it would be regrettable if the Kelantan government used sermons to slander others -- something that was common in the state -- as it could destroy unity.

On the move to uniformise the sermon text read during Hari Raya prayers, he said it would have merit only in certain states because not all states had the problem of differing text.

"Nevertheless, what is important is that we are unanimous in our view that the objective of the sermon must be to unite the ummah and improve morals, not to vent frustrations or attack rival parties," he added.

Turning to the traffic congestion experienced in most towns during the double festival holidays, he said the state governments and local authorities could emulate the development of infrastructure and public transport system in Kuala Lumpur, like the light rail transit system and commuter train service.

He advised them to adopt a proactive approach to overcome the problem before the situation worsened.

Many state governments, like those in Pulau Pinang, Perak and Johor, had initiated steps to improve the situation, he said.

Anwar said he had also discussed the matter with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and a meeting might be held with the Menteri Besar, chief ministers and town planners next month.

Anwar also said the congestion in Kuala Lumpur was quite bad because the bus service did not run as smoothly as planned, and expansion of roads did not match the increase in the number of vehicles.

He added that the government could not give more attention to infrastructure development in the city as it would be at the expense of development in the rural areas and small towns.

Anwar said detailed planning was needed to resolve the problem which could not be eliminated in a short time because, sometimes, there were delays in implementation due to the time taken for the approval process and consultations between agencies and the project contractors.

Asked about a proposed third link for Pulau Pinang, he said Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon had informed him about it and he asked the latter to submit a detailed proposal.

He added, however, that the proposal was premature and would need further study.

Anwar said he was satisfied with prices of goods during the festive season although there were complaints that some places raised prices.

He commended the Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs for its efforts to ensure that prices were kept to a reasonable level.

Anwar, also the Finance Minister, also commented on the position of the

ringgit against the US dollar, saying it should not be made an issue because the country's economic position was stable and strong.

If the value of the ringgit remained at a reasonable level, it would continue to strengthen, he added.

He said, however, the ringgit should not only be compared with the greenback but with other major currencies to gauge its real strength.

"So long as the nation's products and exports can compete in the international market, our currency will remain strong," he added.

About 10,000 people from all walks of life flocked to Anwar's open house from 9 a.m. to wish him and his wife "Selamat Hari Raya."

Dr Koh and several members of the State Executive Council, party leaders and community leaders were among the well-wishers.

The hordes of visitors caused a jam along the road leading to Anwar's house.

Traffic was also piled up along roads leading to the Penang Bridge and the trip across to the island took hours.

The situation was no better at the Butterworth ferry terminal which was also jammed with vehicles trying to avoid the congestion on the Penang Bridge. -- BERNAMA

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