

Anwar: Royal address not an order, open to debate

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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim said the royal address delivered in Parliament by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong today does not amount to "an instruction" to the Dewan Rakyat.

The address is akin to the arguments and opinions of the executive, as read out by the head of state, and is therefore open for debate in the House.

NONE"The Agong's speech is always a speech from the throne, as submitted by the prime minister for consideration.

"It is a speech from the throne, recommended by the PM," Anwar said when met by reporters after today's opening ceremony of the first sitting of the 13th Parliament by the Agong.

He was responding to queries on his comments on the royal address which seemed to be pro-BN and advice all to accept the results of the last polls and for MPs not to engage in destructive activities that may destroy the nation.

Anwar argued that the royal address was open for "rebuttal, discourse and is the basis for debate" in the motion to discuss the royal address in the House, which traditionally follows the speech by the Agong.

"In all democratic conventions, the speech suggested by PM is for debate in the House... it is standard practice in any parliamentary democracy."

'Address must be seriously considered'

The address read out by the Agong, Anwar said, is to be "seriously considered by the House". He then related his own experience when he was in the BN government, when he chaired the government committee to recommend the royal address to the sitting Agong.

When the motion to discuss the address is tabled by the backbenchers tomorrow, Anwar said, the opposition would come out with its own arguments to points raised in the address.

"I shall start the debate, on our part."

One thing he did note, though, was the lack of mention of the haze, which Anwar said was "a flaw" in the speech, since the adverse weather condition was causing serious problems to the nation and should have been raised in the House.

NONE asked about the origin of the royal address at a press conference afterwards, Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Wan Jaafar (left), a former Dewan Rakyat deputy speaker, said the speech originated from the palace but admitted that as per constitutional precepts, the Agong fulfils his duties as ruler "on advice of the prime minister".

"The speech came from the palace, but the prime minister's advice can take many forms," Wan Junaidi said.

He refused to entertain presumptions that the speech came from the PM's Office, but reiterated that the premier gives his advice to the Agong in many ways.

Wan Junaidi stressed that the Agong is his own person, with his own feelings and thoughts, and he would have his own input in the conduct of his duties, such as delivering the royal address to Parliament, in addition to the "advice" from the head of the executive.

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