

**Anwar: Don't deny rights of non-Muslims**  
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**Soon Li Tsin**

Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) advisor Anwar Ibrahim has blamed the government for perpetuating the injustices caused by Article 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution.

Speaking at the party's dinner entitled 'Time for change' held in Sentul last night, he said the provision was meant to protect Muslims, not to deny the rights of non-Muslims.

"The issue is not where non-Muslims oppose to the provision to protect and uphold Islam as religion of the federation or the amendments to Article 121(1A).

"The issue is the concern and anxiety among non-Muslims when they see these decisions meant to protect Muslims are being used to harass and deny the rights of non-Muslims," he said.

He asserted that this is due to a weak government and leadership.

"What's wrong with explaining the situation to others? Muslims should explain their fears and we can discuss about it. In Islam, you cannot force non-Muslims to follow (the religion)," he stressed.

Article 121(1A) states that the civil courts do not have jurisdiction on "any matter" which falls within the jurisdiction of the syariah courts.

### **Subashini's case**

His comments were made in light of the recent case involving an Indian Hindu woman who was told to seek legal redress from the Syariah Court by the Court of Appeal.

On March 13, the appellate court had dismissed 28-year-old R Subashini's attempt to stop Muslim-convert husband Muhammad Shafi from bringing divorce proceedings to the Syariah Court.

She was told by justices Suriyadi Halim Omar and Hassan Lah who made the majority 2-1 decision to take her case before the Syariah Court instead.

At the function, Anwar yet again took potshots at Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak regarding the US\$120 million commission through submarine deals from France and the US\$100 million commission for Sukhoi jets from Russia.

"These are all linked back to Najib. He told the media that he doesn't react to Anwar but this is nothing personal.

"He has to answer to the public. I dare take him on, anytime, anywhere," he said to over 800 people who cheered him on.

His 40-minute speech was punctuated with witty remarks and covered various topics including language and education.

He also touched on the New Economic Policy (NEP) and called for its review.

"It has been 30 years. Review lah. The government should study it - does it work, what's the problem.

### **Merely following Umno**

"Now we defend the NEP because all the ministers say it is to help Malays. Are they really doing it? They are helping themselves.

"That's why they have hundreds of millions, even billions in their coffers. Enough of this nonsense," he said.

The former deputy prime minister also challenged the ruling leaders on their national unity policies.

"Ask the Malays in the kampungs or even in Machap, they are being treated like second or third-class citizens.

"The first-class Malay citizens are the children and families of the leaders of Umno with MIC, MCA and Gerakan's support.

"I want to challenge Umno ministers because there's no use challenging MCA, MIC and Gerakan because all they do is follow behind Umno," he cheekily said.

The dinner was attended by NGO activists, party members and supporters.

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