

Innovation Agenda to reset Malaysia

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CERTAIN quarters are calling on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to “stop behaving like the opposition leader”. These calls are likely triggered by his probing into the alleged squandering of billions of funds by the previous government.

For example, former aides of a past prime minister had criticised Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail for saying he would discuss the allegations with the inspector-general of the police.

Other allegations have surfaced, such as a party’s questionable sources of funding for the recent general election, and directly awarded flood mitigation projects worth RM7 billion.

If these allegations hold water, the people involved would likely act like the Malay simile “*seperti cacing kepanasan*” (writhing like worms experiencing heat). It makes them anxious and uncomfortable.

It is a given that such inquiries may leave some quarters feeling the heat. In any case, people are



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innocent until proven guilty.

So, why the fuss? Firstly, we are not talking about petty crimes. These are serious allegations that involve staggering amounts of money and high-profile people. Secondly, it is wrong to state that Anwar has not been behaving like a “true” prime minister, whatever that means.

If his order of business is setting high standards, sharing the economic burden with the people, looking into cost of living issues while tackling potential mega corruption cases and scandals and balancing tricky cabinet dynamics to ensure stability don’t meet their definition of a true prime minister, then I don’t

know what is.

Anwar set a high bar when he chose not to take a salary despite taking two roles and got ministers to agree to a 20 per cent salary reduction as a sign of sharing the economic burden with the people.

Additionally, within a short time, we see efforts to reduce the prices of eggs and ensure sustainable supply. On top of this, given how gambling has serious impacts on society, Anwar has reduced special lottery draws to just eight per year from 22 under Perikatan Nasional rule.

Investigating potential misappropriation of funds, corruption and scandals are all well within Anwar’s role as prime minister and finance minister. If anything, this is a role for all lawmakers.

Moving forward, Anwar’s administration should look into the “Innovation Agenda” (IA) aimed at social, institutional and economic challenges that demand immediate attention.

The focus of IA should be:

UNITY AND TOLERANCE:

Forging a common identity to

serve the interest of society;

TRANSPARENCY AND GOOD

GOVERNANCE: Anwar’s Reformasi agenda means implementing institutional reforms towards an impact-oriented use of government resources with quantifiable outcomes and results;

CURBING COSTS: Cutting down intermediaries between producers and consumers and breaking up monopolies should be the administration’s top priority. In particular, bloated supply chains with restricted approved permits, such as rice, sugar and other agricultural items;

FOOD SECURITY: The government and agricultural government-linked companies must take the lead in investing in and promoting the use of innovative technologies and sustainable practices in farming, fishing and livestock rearing;

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION:

Complementing local start-ups with internationally protected intellectual property and knowledge transfer from the best sources so that it finds a thriving community and ecosystem in

Malaysia and also serves as a launching pad to exciting digital marketplaces in Southeast Asia;

SUNRISE TECHNOLOGIES:

Clean technology companies will become the largest enterprises in the world, replacing the tech giants in the future. The existential challenges of climate change are engendering a shift in the way humans balance their consumption with their environment; and

FOREIGN INVESTMENT:

Rehabilitate Malaysia’s diminishing reputation as an investment destination. Build up its public and private marketplaces and exchanges so that it attracts global funding sources looking for high-quality, high-tech, high-value investment returns.

The IA suggested above and promoted by the new administration should be a holistic movement to replace outdated systems to better serve the needs of the people. Let the process of resetting Malaysia unfold accordingly.

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