

PM: PEOPLE'S WELFARE, LIVELIHOOD MY PRIORITY

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Skyscrapers, mega projects won't be Anwar's way to cement his legacy

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DATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim said his priority as prime minister is the welfare and livelihood of the people, and not the construction of mega projects as a way of cementing his legacy.

He said his focus was on people-centric policies. This, he added, was why he had instructed for action to be taken to help the people, especially the urban poor, including traders and stall owners.

He stressed that all planning towards this purpose must adhere to the principles of public governance.

"We can't just think of skyscrapers. To me, since becoming prime minister, I have been thinking of stalls, beginning with how we can beautify these stalls and make them clean, as well as presentable," he said.

He was speaking at the "Majlis Ilmu Perdana Bersama Ahli Akademik dan Warga Institusi Pengajian Tinggi" event at Seri Perdana here on Thursday night.

Present were Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im Mokhtar and representatives from the Group of 70 Malay Professors, Malaysian Academy of Islamic Sciences and Darul Ehsan Institute.

Anwar said with this in mind, he had given Kuala Lumpur City Hall three months to submit its plan on how to beautify stalls under the local authority.

This, he said, was necessary as he did not want local councils to only think of tall buildings and skyscrapers.

Anwar said these were among the issues raised in the meeting with the City Hall management on Thursday.

"I told City Hall that we must improve cleanliness, beautify, promote tourism and boost the economy with good public governance.

"I want a report in three



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking at the 'Majlis Ilmu Perdana Bersama Ahli Akademik dan Warga Institusi Pengajian Tinggi' event in Putrajaya on Thursday. PIC COURTESY OF PMO

months on plans to do this. Don't say it can't be done, that there's no one to do it or there's no space. I won't accept this. I want answers."

He said housing issues were also discussed with City Hall.

Anwar said homes like the Sri Perlis flats in Bandar Tun Razak have existed for 40 years, but only have one room per unit, an issue that warranted attention.

"We chase growth, talk about skyscrapers and built a new city in Putrajaya, but our people, especially the poor, the majority of whom are Malays, live in poverty.

"The government doesn't have a lot of money, but our priority is clear."

Anwar said the government must fight for the welfare of the community and ordinary people, not for the prime minister, cabinet or political parties.

On Thursday, Anwar held a closed-door briefing with City Hall's top management. It was his first visit to City Hall since taking office as prime minister nearly a month ago.

After the briefing, Anwar held a private meeting with Kuala Lumpur members of parliament.

In the new cabinet, the Federal Territories Ministry is now a department under the Prime Minister's Department.

The prime minister said the unity government's efforts included restoring confidence and implementing change for the people.

"The challenges we face here are complex, but we have to start somewhere. We cannot bear grudges against those who came before us. We can forgive, but not be so forgiving until we are

stabbed in the chest," he said.

The prime minister said the main challenge the government faced in propagating the concept of nationalism was that the people had become bored, cynical and disdainful at the elite, especially the political elite.

"Why? Because they (the elite) do not walk the talk, because corruption has become a culture, because they have been offering only shallowness and ignorance."

Anwar said his first task as prime minister was to restore trust by making a few sacrifices to show the people that not all political leaders were greedy.

"Gestures such as not taking a salary are necessary to send a signal that not all politicians are greedy. I have a house, a car, bodyguards and a parliamentary allowance. Those are enough, so I can reject a salary.

"I don't think anyone would begrudge the prime minister if he uses a Mercedes Benz, but I had to send a signal and thus rejected it in favour of using a Proton Perdana (as the official car). This is all meant as a message to restore confidence.

"The same goes to this big house (referring to the prime minister's official residence), what do we do? Although I don't live here, every week we have events, such as educational sessions, *zikir* events and now it becomes a place where the public come and go," he said.

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at Masjid Saidina Uthman Ibn Affan in Bandar Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur, after Friday prayers yesterday.