

'Dress down' to suit current times

New style seen to project less bureaucracy

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PETALING JAYA: The "dress down" culture of the government is being well-accepted all around, with experts saying the new approach highlights less bureaucracy and formality.

The post-pandemic environment has ushered in a trend of informality in the workplace, according to professional image consultant Dolly Kee.

She said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who these days seldom wears a necktie, was conveying an image of a leader who wants to be seen as relatable, genuine, relaxed and approachable.

Anwar had opted for a pair of baju melayu and sandals when clocking in on his first day in office on Nov 25, 2022.

The PKR president chaired a no-tie Cabinet meeting on Dec 7, 2022.

"It is definitely his deliberate choice which, when in the right environment and when he has confidence and stylish intention, can certainly work," she said.

However, Anwar has been photographed wearing a complete suit and tie as well as songkok when having an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and other rulers, including the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, and the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

"The suit-and-tie look is highly



Less formal: Anwar is setting a trend for workplace dress code.

recommended as a complete set for most professional and formal events or occasions.

"This is especially true for events involving an audience with royalty and high-level meetings with country heads and senior foreign dignitaries, as well as while attending parliamentary sittings, where the highest degree of decorum is to be expected," she said.

She pointed out that batik shirts

and the baju melayu could be vibrant alternatives to the formal suit-and-tie look.

"We are blessed with our beautiful batik shirts and baju melayu for men. The quality of each of the dress choices, such as long-sleeved batik shirts, offers our senior top officials the classy-style equivalent of the suit and tie.

"Generally, be it in the civil service or the corporate sector, if your boss doesn't wear a tie, jacket or blazer, any subordinate who does will inadvertently commit the faux pas of 'outdressing the boss,'" said Kee.

Urbane Academy Sdn Bhd founder Georgianna Das said times had changed as far as the professional dress code was concerned.

"Everyone should be comfortable wearing what they want to, as long as it's not garish, vulgar or jarring to anyone. Malaysians would want leaders who have integrity and put the welfare of all citizens in the country first.

"There is no point having government leaders in designer business suits if they lack emotional intelligence and practise corruption, nepotism or cronyism," said Das.

Deputy Health Minister Lukanisman Awang Sauni said most of the ministers and senior officers opted for the no-tie look as they wanted to display the same image as the prime minister.

"It's a matter of individual choice and style whether to wear a tie or otherwise when attending official programmes," he said.