

PM: Graft is the real enemy

It's not other races and religious issues, says Anwar

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KUALA LUMPUR: The real enemy of this country is corruption and not the bogeymen of racial and religious issues as played up by politicians, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the real threat to the survival of Malays in the country did not come from other races but rather, a corrupt system and greedy leaders stealing from the country.

He also called out political leaders who try to appeal to voters, including Malays, by painting the illusion that their positions and power base were being challenged by other races.

"People can harp on the issue of race and religion but, to me, it's completely irrelevant.

"It's an attempt by political leaders to hijack and distract the people from the central issues of governance in this country.

"They want to appeal to the races, including the Malays, that their positions and power base are being challenged.

"But my answer to that question is this: it's not being challenged by the Malay, Chinese, Indian or the Sabah and Sarawak businessmen.

"Malay survival is being threatened by a corrupt system, a greedy coterie of leaders who have been stealing public funds from this country.

"We will have to continue to work together to ensure we save the country from endemic corruption," he said in his speech at the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) Chinese New Year 2023 reception at Wisma Chinese Chamber here yesterday.

Also present were Anwar's wife and Bandar Tun Razak MP Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming, other MPs and members of the unity government.

Anwar said he had been looking at the papers detailing the development of the country over the past



Best wishes: Anwar (fifth from right) and Dr Wan Azizah attending the ACCCIM Chinese New Year reception at Wisma Chinese Chamber in Kuala Lumpur. With them are Low (Anwar's right) and Loke (third from left).
— FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

five years and that there were corrupt practices of scoring huge commissions and bribes in previous deals and contracts.

"It's not for me to conduct investigations or prosecute, but I trust the authorities will not delay this because we are not talking about the political survival of any individual, party or government - we are talking about the survival of this country from corruption," he said.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, added that Budget 2023, which is due to be retabled on Feb 24, would focus on big issues such as clear economic policies, helping businesses, the environment as well as food security and the country's high food import bill.

He also alluded to ACCCIM president Tan Sri Low Kian Chuan's speech earlier on the importance of

political institutions and socio-economic reforms on the economy, adding that these were in line with the government's considerations.

"In rolling out the Budget, those matters will be given a focus.

"For Malaysia to prosper in harmony, we must give space to all races," he said.

This, however, did not mean that the bumiputra community would be sidelined, said Anwar.

"Of course, we pay attention to the most vulnerable groups and the bumiputra community will continue to be given attention, but this is not a zero-sum game," he said.

Low had suggested several priorities to facilitate better economic growth, boost higher investment and lower the cost of doing business.

They include undertaking institutional reforms in key areas - he said

institutional problems create uncertainty, unnecessary red tape, and bureaucratic burdens, hindering the process of setting up and running a business in Malaysia.

Low also called for less politicking and more focus on the country's development and the people's welfare.

"Progressive and moderate policies should be implemented," he said.

He said better stakeholder engagement would also smoothen the implementation of policy change to avoid flip-flops and remove uncertainty for businesses and investors.