

Value in cleaning school toilets

Anwar: Pupils can learn to be more appreciative of the work of others

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KUALA LUMPUR: Getting pupils to take turns to wash school toilets should not be viewed negatively, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said that such an activity would help instil Madani values in pupils, while teaching them to be more appreciative of the efforts of others.

"I had directed Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek to check on conditions in schools as many of their toilets were spoiled and have been neglected for years.

"I said, 'How can we send our children to school if the toilets are in such a state?'

"They are humans, too. If they were divine, they wouldn't need to use the toilet," he said in his speech launching the D'Anjung Selera Madani food court in Bandar Tun Razak here yesterday.

Anwar, who was education minister from 1986 to 1991, said



Walkabout: Anwar visiting the stalls after launching the D'Anjung Selera Madani food court in Kuala Lumpur. - RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

he had implemented a programme at the time where pupils took turns to clean their school toilets.

"I received actual telegrams (at the time) from some professionals and well-to-do parents, telling me that they had sent their children to school to learn, not to

wash toilets.

"My answer was that education was also about learning cleanliness, including respecting those who clean toilets," he said.

He said the activity helped pupils better value the effort of their own mothers who kept their home toilets clean.

"They will also appreciate street and public toilet cleaners, and that there is value in their work," he added.

Anwar also said he gave some leeway to pupils who refused to participate in the programme, saying that they were not allowed to use school toilets as a trade-off.

The Prime Minister said there was a need for an attitude change.

"At times, the well-to-do have no concern or compassion for the lower-income groups.

"I do not want the Madani concept to be an empty slogan. The people must know that there is compassion and love through Madani.

"We should not only look at the material ownership of a person, but at their humanity," he said.

Earlier, Anwar said he made cleanliness and comfort of public amenities for city dwellers a priority.

However, he said the transformation should not be confined to the Federal Territories, but must be nationwide.

"I want to remind all that this should be done in all the cities in the country.

"I don't want it only to be done specifically for Kuala Lumpur," he said, adding that the relevant local councils must have a clear policy on transforming the image of their cities.

He added that he had discussed the matter with several mentris besar and chief ministers.

Anwar also announced that rental for stalls at D'Anjung Selera Madani will be lowered to RM200 from RM400, before he took a walk around the food court which was redeveloped and upgraded at a cost of RM7.2mil.

The food court houses 24 food stalls, three kiosks, a surau and 48 parking spaces.