

# Development meaningless if culturally barren, says PM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Skyscrapers and mega projects in the city would be meaningless if they are “culturally barren”.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said imbalance between physical and human development had led to problems, including the hardcore poor and dire living conditions in society.

“We must ensure balance between development and safeguarding the people’s wellbeing.

“If we focus only on development — when plot ratio is not a question — then we’ll see imbalance,” he said here.

Such imbalance, he said, would reflect in overcrowding, the existence of slums and lack of proper housing for the people.

He said many forests had been cleared for development.

“Because we were too focused on development, we didn’t allocate areas for people’s housing projects earlier on (in town planning). It’s not too late, although it is (a) serious (problem). I ask the municipal authorities to look into this. Make sure there’s balance (between development and the people’s wellbeing).”

The housing problem in cities, including here, has driven many people to live further from their workplaces, causing population to be concentrated in suburbs instead. This has contributed to the worsening traffic congestion due to daily commuting.

Anwar said in safeguarding people’s wellbeing, protecting the rights to services, including proper healthcare facilities and food outlets, must also be prioritised.

“We want five-star restaurants, but the food stalls are equally important. We want the stalls to also be good enough for those from the low-income group. If we can achieve this, it will create a balanced community that accepts the principle of equilibrium where there is justice for all.”

Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah said the nine-day festival was aimed at boosting public awareness and showcasing various species found in Malaysia, while promoting a sustainable lifestyle.

He said it was in line with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals to improve awareness on the function and role of public parks in sustainable living and improve the people’s quality of life.