

'Time to chart a new future'

PM: Free Malaysia of racism, corruption and religious bigotry



Show of support: Anwar surrounded by supporters as he arrived at the Youth Empowerment Fair at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre here yesterday. He called on Malaysians to stop corruption, racism and religious bigotry. - Bernama

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KUALA LUMPUR: It is time for Malaysians to unite and back the current leadership to end corruption as well as racial and religious bigotry, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Remember, I need the full support of every Malaysian. It is time for Malaysia to chart a new history.

"No more corruption. Stop racism and religious bigotry. Let us work together," Anwar said to a standing ovation during a youth dialogue session at the Youth Empowerment Fair at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre here yesterday.

Anwar said it was heart-warming that youth at the dialogue session supported his stand.

"When I look at the innocent faces of youth, who were full of support, I'm telling you, you made

my day. I love you guys," he added.

Earlier, the Prime Minister said it was fine for students to be involved in political activism as long as they did not end up as lackeys or staunch party loyalists.

"You want to be an activist? Okay, but don't be a 'macai' (lackey) or 'walaun'," he said.

Walaun is a colloquial reference which describes individuals who are staunch PAS loyalists.

Anwar also spoke about his experience as a student activist, which landed him two years in the Kamunting detention centre under the Internal Security Act (ISA) after he protested against rural poverty.

He said the silver lining in his imprisonment was that he began reading books.

"I started reading books that I didn't read when I was at university. That is why I got a little smarter," he added.

Without naming names, Anwar also said a certain desperate leader who had fallen out of power had resorted to manipulating sensitive public issues.

"He also resorted to religious bigotry without any understanding," he said.

The premier warned that stem action would be taken against those who stoked racial and religious flames.

"For those expressing their opinions, we will protect your rights.

"But those who are playing up racial and religious issues, dividing the people, and instigating violence - I will take stem action," Anwar said.

Last Friday, after chairing a Cabinet meeting, Anwar said he had ordered security forces to be on high alert against those stirring up racial and religious rhetoric ahead of a planned "Malay Proclamation" gathering that was to be attended

by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The gathering was called off after its organisers failed to secure the venue for the second time. They were also rejected for a third time yesterday.

At the dialogue yesterday, Anwar fielded questions from youth in the session moderated by actress Amelia Henderson.

Various issues were raised, and he committed to addressing them, including the monopoly of Touch 'n Go in the highway toll collection system.

"Touch 'n Go has operated for more than two decades, and there were no convincing developments in its system.

"We will reconsider the Touch 'n Go monopoly," he added.

Other issues raised were the need to improve the public transport system and cannabis legalisation, to which he said he would consider all views.