

PM: NATIONAL SECURITY NOT AFFECTED

'Security agencies told to boost screening following visa exemption announcement'

KUALA LUMPUR

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has given his assurance that the aspect of national security will not be neglected, following the government's recent announcement on visa exemption for several countries.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said security agencies had been asked to strengthen security screening so that visa exemption facilities would not affect national security.

"There are honourable members who may feel concerned because security issues have been raised, so relevant agencies have been asked to boost screening so that this facility does not affect national security," he said when tabling the Supply Bill 2024 for the second reading in the Dewan Negara yesterday.

On Nov 26, Anwar announced

that the government is granting a 30-day visa exemption to Chinese and Indian nationals to Malaysia from Dec 1, in the spirit of Malaysia-China bilateral relations, which will span 50 years next year.

He said it was an additional facility to visa exemptions enjoyed by citizens from Gulf states and West Asian countries.

Anwar said he had asked the top management of the armed forces to manage its assets without interference from outside parties, including the government, as it was often plagued by procurement-related problems.

He said the armed forces would be responsible for any technical or implementation problem, while the government, particularly the Finance Ministry, would only be responsible for negotiations for equipment asset costs.

"It's better that we negotiate, not through an agent, but directly with the relevant governments. We have already started with Turkiye, South Korea and Italy. If there is anything to be decided, it is (the agency's) own decision, for example, the navy decides (for navy assets).

"Otherwise, billions of ringgit will just flow out of control. Safety and equipment issues are very



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critical for us. We cannot afford to spend tens of billions of ringgit and see very poor assets, compared with the capabilities of other (countries)."

In the meantime, he said the reduced entertainment duty rate for the Federal Territories, from 25 per cent to the new rate, was not intended to encourage immorality as there were still strict conditions to be adhered to.

Anwar also touched on the is-

sue of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

He urged Malaysians not to use the Palestine issue to further polarise people in the country.

Anwar said Malaysians, regardless of religion or race, must understand that the government's stance of supporting Palestine and rejecting Israeli atrocities was on humanitarian grounds.

"Some people ask why we take sides (is it) only because Pales-

tinians are Muslims? Of course, this shows ignorance because there are also Christians — a minority — in Palestine."

Anwar said the Zionist regime not only demolished hundreds of mosques but also destroyed seven churches.

"So, we have to look at it from the point of view of cruelty, and from the point of view of humanity because it also involves non-Muslims," he said. **Bernama**