

No issue with visa rules

Security not compromised by exemptions, says Anwar

KUALA LUMPUR. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has given his assurance that the country's national security will not be neglected following the recent announcement of visa exemptions for several countries.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said security agencies had been asked to strengthen their screening process so that the visa exemption facility would not affect national security.

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

On Nov 26, Anwar announced that the government had granted a 30-day visa exemption for Chinese and Indian nationals

from Dec 1.

The former was done in the spirit of Malaysia-China bilateral relations, which celebrates its 50th year next year.

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

Anwar said he asked the Armed Forces to manage their assets without interference from outside parties, including the government, as this was plagued by procurement-related problems.

This means that the Armed Forces, he said, would be fully responsible should there be a technical or implementation problem, while the government, particularly the Finance Ministry, would only negotiate in terms of equipment costs.

"It's better that we should 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 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 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)," he added.

Touching on the Israel-Palestine conflict, he urged Malaysians not to use this issue to further polarise the country's community of different religions and races.

Malaysians, regardless of religion or race, need to understand that the government's stance of supporting Palestine and rejecting Israeli atrocities was made based on humanitarian grounds, he said.

"Some people ask why we take

sides - is it only because Palestine is Muslim? Of course there is ignorance because although the land of Palestine is indeed Arab Muslim majority, there is also a Christian minority," he said.

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 humanity because it also involves non-Muslims," he said.

Tabled by Anwar in Parliament on Oct 13, Budget 2024, themed "Economic Reforms; Empower People", involves an allocation of RM393.8bil, the highest budget ever tabled in the history of Malaysia.