

# 'We're keeping a close watch'

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has issued yet another stern warning to officials at enforcement agencies to reflect the government's seriousness in combating corruption and curbing leakages.

"This is a reminder not only to the Customs Department, Inland Revenue Board and Immigration Department; we're keeping a close watch.

"I really hope we can steer away from reports of misconduct as a majority of (enforcement officers) want to do a good job but they live amid the culture of *sakau* (kleptocracy) so they said they were forced to do it," he said at the Finance Ministry's monthly assembly here yesterday.

This came following the latest case of 34 Customs Department officers being involved in a smuggling syndicate, which had contributed to a loss of about RM2 billion to the country.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, expressed his dismay over the case, saying that losses from the leakages could have been used to drive economic growth, help the needy, improve the quality of education and healthcare facilities, as well as offer higher pay to civil servants.

He said the irresponsible action of a small group of officers could tarnish the image of the public service when a majority of civil servants duly uphold their integrity in serving the country.

"This is our problem; we appoint director-generals, agency heads with high salaries but they only wish to protect wrongdoings (happening in their organisations). The problem will persist no matter how many chiefs we change, as there is no willpower (to fight corruption)."