

# PM: Don't protect bad apples

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## Anwar slams dept heads for failing to address staff offences

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Prime Minister has criticised certain department heads for covering up their staff's wrongdoings, pointing out that change will not happen if action is not taken to eradicate such offences.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said there must be determination on the part of department heads to ensure wrongdoings do not happen under their watch, and if they do, prompt action is taken.

He lauded the Customs director-general for her boldness in acting against employees who allegedly took bribes from a smuggling syndicate, causing billions of ringgit in losses to the country's revenue.

"When department heads choose not to protect (wrongdoers), change can happen. If we don't act, wrongdoings will continue to happen," he said at the Finance Ministry's monthly gathering here yesterday.

He acknowledged that there were risks in taking action against those who had violated the law and tarnished the good name of the department.

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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

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"Yes, there are risks. There are those who will be angry. But it is your responsibility as a leader to act and clean up your department of bad hats," he said.

In the case of the Customs Department, Anwar said that its director-general Datuk Anis Rizana Mohd Zainudin had acted promptly to remove the staff members from their workplace at KLIA Cargo and take disciplinary action against them.

"This is the action that we want to see from department heads, rather than them trying to hide and protect those who commit

wrongdoing," he added.

Anwar said the act of a small group of people must not be allowed to tarnish the public service.

"I am confident that the majority of civil servants are those with integrity and who love the country," he said.

Recently, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) arrested 34 Customs officers assigned to KLIA Cargo in connection with smuggling activities, believed to have caused a leakage of RM2bil in the country's revenue over the past two years.

The suspects were arrested in a special operation code named Op Samba 2.0 carried out jointly by the MACC, Inland Revenue Board and Bank Negara.

Investigators believe that the officers had received RM4.7mil from the syndicate to facilitate the smuggling of chewable tobacco, cigarettes, liquor, health products and vehicle spare parts.

Meanwhile, Anwar also acknowledged that his efforts to bring change also came with challenges and not everyone was receptive to change.

He claimed that certain MPs had questioned the need for change, particularly when the government proposed to implement targeted subsidies and changes in the pension system.

"There are MPs who said this cannot be done because some of them are in the B40 income group. How can you claim to be B40 when your salary and allowances are thousands of ringgit?"

"But I am willing to take risks so that changes can be made and we can grow and prosper," he said.