

Unity vital to uplift nation, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday stressed the importance of unity among Malaysians, irrespective of race or religion, to elevate the nation to greater and dignified heights.

In his special address in conjunction with *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, Anwar said the country cannot marginalise or antagonise any group or community, regardless of whether they are in the majority or minority, for any reason.

He said the importance of Islam as the federal religion and the advancement of *syariah* law in the country should not be underestimated in the process of nation building.

"In fact, we must stand firm, be resolute and unwavering in our commitment to instilling values and building a dignified nation. But let us not view this as a pretext to belittle, insult or disrupt the cultural practices and ways of life of others."

Anwar's address was broadcast over local television networks.

He called on the people to grasp the true essence of *Aidilfitri*, a time when Muslims celebrate their triumph in returning to the core of humanity through the sanctity of *Ramadan*, which serves as a spiritual platform for abandoning harmful practices and customs.

He emphasised the need for steadfastness in the pursuit of victory, highlighting that success in any endeavour requires patience, wisdom and meticulous planning to maintain the balance essential for nation building.

"Impetuosity will only lead to failure, and the present government administration must leverage the insights and wisdom of past statesmen to avoid pitfalls and enhance the nation's welfare.

"We do not just demand recognition and praise. Constructive criticism and counsel are equally vital for the country. The nation must foster values to fortify human dignity."

Anwar urged Malaysians, particularly Muslims, to use the occasion of *Aidilfitri* to seek forgiveness for misunderstandings and wrongdoings.

He highlighted the Malaysian tradition of saying *Maaf Zahir dan Batin* (seeking forgiveness for both physical and emotional wrongs) during *Aidilfitri* as a unique practice not found among Muslims in other countries.

"This tradition captures the true spirit of Islam, which is about seeking and granting forgiveness. We all err. Let us not be too proud and claim that we are perfect.

"There have been past conflicts marked by profanity, harsh words and anger. As such, make use of this opportunity to sincerely seek forgiveness."

Anwar also extended apologies to all Muslims and Malaysians if any of his words or actions had inadvertently caused offence. – Bernama