

Critics got it wrong, says Anwar

Malaysia not hiring Singapore English teachers, just requesting volunteers

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has denied claims that Malaysia is considering recruiting teachers from Singapore to teach English.

The Prime Minister said the proposal, meant to be a volunteer programme, was aimed at boosting English proficiency and improving bilateral relations between Malaysia and Singapore.

"Sometimes, the 'three-minute experts' will simply make (claims) on social media and all their facts are wrong.

"The assumption is that we are planning to hire English teachers from Singapore. That is wrong," he said in his speech at the Madani Aspiration Gathering at Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) yesterday.

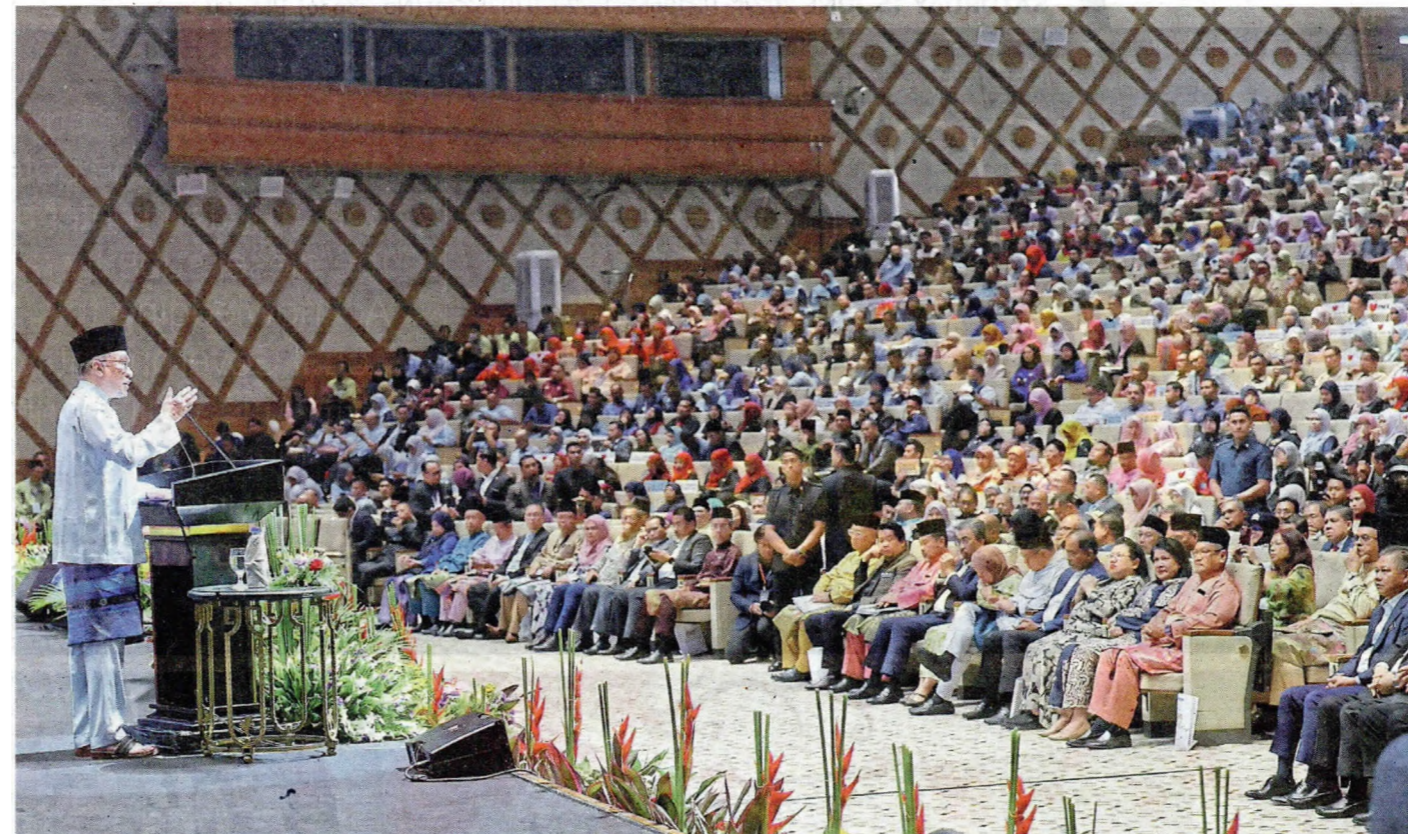
"Recently, I met with Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and discussed several matters.

"What I discussed with the Singapore PM is to organise an aid scheme of appointing volunteers who are paid by the Singaporean government to teach English in poor urban and rural areas as well as remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

On Wednesday, Anwar and Wong met to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations.

The following day, Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz said the government should look into getting retired teachers with English teaching proficiency and pay them higher salaries equivalent to Singaporean standards.

Anwar said he was subsequently criticised by certain quarters for disrespecting local teachers by



Wish for success: Anwar delivering his speech at the Madani Aspiration Gathering at Putrajaya International Convention Centre. - Bernama

trying to bring in teachers from across the Causeway.

"This is purely to strengthen ties between our countries," he said.

"I also want to build better relations with other countries. We want to be good with Thailand, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia - our important neighbours.

"There were some who said that I do not respect my own people and try to 'bring in Communists' from Singapore. We offer it to all countries.

"At universities in Uzbekistan... If they want to send their students here, I said it's also good for us to send our lecturers there to

observe the changes.

"It was the same with Japan. I also discussed it with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida," he added.

Meanwhile, Anwar said he had ordered the police to conduct thorough investigations of high-profile cases such as the murder of six-year-old autistic boy Zayn Rayyan Abdul Matiin and the acid attack on footballer Faisal Halim.

"This is to avoid any misperception by the public.

"I am the Prime Minister but I am also human. I also want to know why such things happened, and how some have the heart to

abuse and murder a child.

"If it was totally up to me, I would want the police to (have answers) tomorrow, but (the investigations) must go through due process.

"I understand that the people are also upset.

"So, I have told the police to expedite their investigations but conduct them properly, to avoid any wrong perception.

"Some out there may feel that this person or that person is guilty. They have already made their assumptions about (that)," he added.

On Thursday, Zaim Ikhwan Zahari and Ismanira Abdul

Manaf, the parents of Zayn-Rayyan, were charged in the Sessions Court in Petaling Jaya with child negligence, which potentially caused physical injury to their six-year-old autistic son in December last year.

Both of them pleaded not guilty to the charge and were released on bail.

The case is fixed for mention on July 26.