

CHANGING FROM OLD WAYS

'Immigration Dept must work as team, avoid past mistakes'

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday told the Immigration Department to work as a team and continue making improvements to avoid repeating mistakes that tarnished the image of the agency.

He said the unity government, which was committed to carrying out reforms for the country's progress, could not afford to have one of its team members stuck in its old ways.

He said improvement and progress were necessary not only to enable the nation to move forward, but also to safeguard the

country's image among tourists and the global community.

"If there are practices that are deemed as not right (such as going against the laws and principles of good governance), let us correct them.

"We must be 'clean' in order for us to save the country. Let us strive to find the best ways to improve our performance.

"Expectations and hopes are high like a mountain for the unity government. This means, we must move forward and cannot stay complacent," he said in his speech at the Aidilfitri Madani open house organised by the Im-

migration Department.

Present were Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, his deputy Datuk Seri Dr Shamsul Anuar Nasarah and Immigration Department director-general Datuk Ruslin Jusoh. Joining them was Anwar's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

"We should not give excuses if we are the ones who are not efficient. That is why people have to wait between two and three hours.

"This is a challenge for us.

"Let us not take things personally when someone gives constructive criticism such as the in-

cident that happened last year," he said.

Although Anwar did not identify the incident, but it was believed that he was referring to the claim by Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing that there was a "culture of corruption" in the handling of foreign visitors at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Anwar said while his views were sometimes firm, they were not directed at the entire department, since the majority were carrying out their duties diligently.

"Those of you who carry out your responsibilities well should

not feel offended by criticism.

"Instead, you should support efforts to resolve mistakes, although it only involved a small group that tarnished the image that the Immigration Department is striving to uphold," he said.

Recently, at the Home Ministry's Aidilfitri celebration, Anwar had reprimanded the department for congestion at the country's checkpoints, particularly at airports.

Describing the rebuke as akin to "parental love", Anwar said tourists would not accept excuses for delays, and hoped the issue could be dealt with effectively.