

PM: Graft a cancer on country, people

KUALA LUMPUR: Corruption is the “main cancer” afflicting the people and country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said weaknesses in governance and widespread corruption must be addressed before tackling the structural problems that undermined the country’s economic strength.

“From the very first year, I had said we needed to put a stop to negotiated tenders and move towards an open tender system... (these are more) transparent and we avoid the practice of commission-taking, which wastes the people’s money,” he said in a special address carried live on television and social media sites on Tuesday night.

“There are some who ask, if corruption is still so prevalent... why action had not been taken against those involved.

“I want to stress that there is a process. Investigations carry on, there is a court process... what is important is that this practice must be stopped.

“The process takes time and sometimes, it can be exhausting.”

Anwar said space should be given to enforcement agencies such

as the police, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Audit Department.

He said efforts to ensure a public service free from corruption and inefficiency needed support and decisive action.

“Maybe there are some who will not take this seriously and say these are all mere political slogans.

“I consider this (criticism) normal in political chess.

“But, be confident, *insyaAllah*, that we will end corruption if we act consistently, bravely and firmly from the highest to the lowest level.”

Anwar cited the example of flood mitigation projects, saying an open tender had saved RM2 billion for the people.

A further RM2 billion, he said, had been saved in enforcement raids against smuggling syndicates since 2017.

Anwar said it was estimated that the country had lost RM2 billion in subsidies to smuggling syndicates over the past few years.

He said the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry had launched the nationwide Op Tiris to stop subsidised fuel smuggling.