

# Vital to overcome weaknesses in governance, graft: PM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Weaknesses in governance and widespread systemic corruption are critical issues that must be addressed immediately before tackling the structural problems that undermine the country's economic strength, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In a live address to the nation on Tuesday night, Anwar said he emphasised the corruption issue because it is the primary cancer that weakens the country's economy, eroding morals and diminishing people's confidence.

He said corruption occurs at every level, top to bottom, burdening the people with the whims of certain groups seeking commissions before giving any approvals.

"In the first year itself, I stressed on the need to stop the practice of direct negotiation in government procurement, referred to as negotiated tender, and to transition to an open tender system."

Earlier, Anwar said the stagnant economy of the people, the lacklustre business ecosystem and the weak financial position of the federal government are the structural problems that are

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decreasing Malaysia's economic strength.

On the issue of punishment for the corrupt raised by the people, Anwar said investigations are ongoing and that legal avenues and court processes must be followed.

He said the government fully empowers enforcement agencies such as the police, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Audit Department to act firmly and ensure a more orderly civil service free from corruption, sluggishness and laziness.

"Most importantly, this practice (corruption) must be stopped. The process takes time and is sometimes exhausting. Like many others, I am also impatient. Why have no actions been taken to address past practices of amassing wealth unlawfully?"

On the actions of certain parties which belittle the effort to fight

corruption, saying it is only a political slogan, Anwar said it is common in politics, and he believes the corruption issue can be resolved if it is addressed consistently and steadfastly.

Citing the flood mitigation projects implemented through open tender, Anwar said the government saved RM2 billion in public funds.

He said the government had also busted civil servants involved in smuggling syndicates at the country's entry points, whose action had cost the country up to RM2 billion since 2017.

Anwar added that there have been attempts to disrupt peace in the nation and its thriving economy.

"In recent weeks, our nation has been shocked by several violent incidents that have claimed the lives of security personnel as well as actions by extremist groups and instigators.

"I assure you that, after my meeting with security forces, we will take firm action against these groups, and *Insha-Allah*, the situation will become calmer and more controlled."

On May 17, two police officers at the Ulu Tiram police station in Johor Bahru, Constable Ahmad Azza Fahmi Azhar, 22, and Constable Muhamad Syafiq Ahmad Said, 24, were killed after being attacked by a masked man armed with a machete while another policeman, Corporal Mohd Hasif Roslan, was injured after being shot.

On the same day, in a separate incident in Kuala Lumpur, two local men were arrested by police officers after attempting to trespass into Istana Negara. A machete was later found in the suspects' vehicle, Bernama reported.

On Saturday, the police confirmed receiving a report from Seputeh MP Teresa Kok over a death threat through a letter sent to her house along with two bullets.

On Sunday, a 35-year-old local man was arrested after being suspected of trespassing at the Dato' Keramat police station in Penang and attempting to seize a police officer's submachine gun.