

Anwar: Better a D than an F

Time is on govt's side to improve rating given by Bersih, says Prime Minister

KUALA LUMPUR: The “D” grading of the government by electoral reform watchdog Bersih is acceptable for now, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Noting that his administration has only served for two years, the Prime Minister said the evaluation could always improve in the period ahead.

“About Bersih’s report, it is okay to get a ‘D’ ... (at least it’s not) an ‘F’. Today, we get a ‘D’ mark for the UPSR but next time, we can get an ‘A’ mark for the SPM,” he told Parliament yesterday.

On Wednesday, Bersih gave the Pakatan Harapan-led administration a “D” grade in its mid-term evaluation, attributing the poor performance to the coalition government’s failure to carry out significant institutional reforms.

The reform group also ranked Anwar behind his predecessors Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in fulfilling their reform promises.

Anwar also defended his administration on the issue of fair allocations for the Opposition as per the Bersih report, reiterating the government’s stance that it was prepared to implement this provided it went through a negotiation process.

“I do not understand the complaints. This was also included in the Bersih report. When I was Opposition Leader, I negotiated with the (then) prime minister, and only after discussions were held did we finalise and receive the initial draft of the allocation.

“YB Larut (Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin) is well aware that negotiations are necessary but the Opposition has refused to engage, causing this matter to drag,” he said in response to a query from Perikatan Nasional’s Pendang MP Datuk Awang Hashim.

Anwar suggested that Awang take on the role of “mediator” and assured that funds would be

channelled if an agreement was reached promptly.

The Prime Minister also said the government would continue to combat corruption, including the recent alleged graft incidences caught on camera in Sabah.

He said addressing corruption was a huge task but pledged to carry on even if the cases involved the wealthy and politicians with a large number of supporters.

“I have been informed by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) that it will continue to investigate, including the recent cases raised in Sabah. The commission said it will continue the investigation with the state assemblymen being called up. But that is all the information I can share.

“Claims that there are efforts to cover up or prevent an investigation are completely false,” he added.

On Nov 16, an NGO lodged a report with the MACC following

the circulation of videos alleging graft in Sabah.

A portal reported the existence of eight videos depicting assemblymen allegedly discussing sums ranging from hundreds of thousands of ringgit to RM4mil with a businessman in exchange for a project. A businessman claimed to possess these recordings and sought whistleblower protection from the MACC.

Since the businessman’s public request for protection on Oct 30, social media has been abuzz with at least a dozen alleged secret videos involving state officials.

The MACC has recorded statements from a Sabah deputy chief minister and two assemblymen on the graft claims linked with the issuance of state mining licences.

On another matter, Anwar said efforts to increase media freedom must be tied to limits on discussing 3R (race, religion and royalty) issues.

“This is because the government must abide by the wishes of the Malay rulers to curb inflammatory discussions on 3R issues that can harm public harmony.

“We allow people to discuss, but the Conference of Malay Rulers are strict. We are tied to their stand that they do not permit or want anyone to criticise without any consequences.”

Anwar said the government believes that 3R issues should not prevent people from voicing out their opinions but added that the authorities must also be allowed to investigate such comments.

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Malaysia has dropped 34 places to rank 107 in the World Press Freedom Index.