

Anwar's take on media freedom perception

> Malay rulers stance on issues tied to 3Rs of royalty, race and religion limit open discussions, says premier

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has acknowledged the need to improve international recognition of Malaysia's media freedom.

He said there are, however, certain limitations due to issues tied to the 3Rs of royalty, race and religion which stem from a request by the Malay rulers for the government to take a stricter stance on these matters and avoid them from being openly discussed.

"While we allow open discussions, the Malay rulers' meetings have been very firm, and we are bound by their views that they do not want or permit any form of public criticism without action.

"When criticisms are directed at me, no matter how severe, no action is taken. However, if a police report is lodged, the police handle it. I accept the remark from Pendang and agree there is a need to improve this perception, but we do have certain limitations," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was replying to a supplementary question from Datuk Awang Hashim (PN-Penang) on Malaysia's drop of 34 places in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, ranking

the country 107 compared with 73 the previous year.

The report published by Reporters Without Borders showed Malaysia scoring 52.07 points this year compared with 62.83 points last year.

Meanwhile, Malaysia has been making optimal use of the world stage and international platforms to urge the world to recognise the state of Palestine and to expel Israel from the United Nations, the Dewan Rakyat was told.

Anwar said he had even brought Malaysia's firm stance on the matter to the recently concluded Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting in Peru, the G20 Summit in Brazil and the Extraordinary Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

"We have been highly vocal. I even proposed to other countries to consider expelling Israel from the UN. We even brought up the issue of Gaza in front of President Joe Biden, President Xi Jinping and other world leaders.

"During the G20 Summit in Brazil, we also opposed the current UN stance and called for world governance reform, specifically for the UN and the veto power not to be limited to the

current (Permanent Five) members, but expanded to include powers such as representatives from Latin America and South Africa.

"How is it that we accept the UN but allow and do nothing when (member) countries violate all of the UN's and its Security Council's resolutions? These countries, in particular Israel, should be expelled."

He said this in reply to Dr Mohammed Taufiq Johari (PH-Sungai Petani) who wanted to know the main issues raised by Malaysia at the Apec Summit, G20 Summit and the Extraordinary Arab-Islamic Summit, Bernama reported.

Anwar said he also questioned why the UN as an organisation that recognises independent nations and opposes colonialism recognises a nation (Israel) that is currently engaged in colonisation.

He expressed his regret over claims by certain parties that Malaysia recognises Israel, when in fact Malaysia has been one of the most vocal countries in raising the issue of genocide in Gaza.

"The interview with (CNN) Richard Quest, I know it was being played.

"To his question, I said and stressed that in the context of the UN, membership is considered a matter of statehood, that is de facto recognition, but we have not recognised Israel from the very beginning, since the era of (former prime minister) Tunku Abdul Rahman until now," said Anwar.