

# PM praises Suhakam for its role in upholding justice

By **CHARLES RAMENDRAN**  
charles.ramen@thestar.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Reflecting on the past struggles he and his family faced more than two decades ago, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim expressed his appreciation to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) for its role in upholding justice and civil liberties.

The Prime Minister said that based on past challenges and experiences of his own, he was aware of the essentiality of a commission such as Suhakam.

"I am here today to express my appreciation because Azizah (Anwar's wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail), my family and I are among those who had approached Suhakam when I was in difficulty in the past.

"With this, I understand the role of the commission from my own personal experiences. I believe others feel there is a need



**All smiles:** Anwar at the commission's 25th anniversary celebrations at KL Sentral. Looking on are Azalina (left) and Mohd Hishamuddin.  
- Bernama

for an agency, such as Suhakam, for its role in defending human rights and justice for all," he said at the commission's 25th anniversary celebrations at KL Sentral

here yesterday.

On the cases of lock-up or custodial deaths, Anwar said Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Razarudin Husain, who was also

present at the event, was receptive to an investigation and study on the issue for greater transparency.

He also recounted his personal encounter of being assaulted in police custody when he was held over two decades ago.

"It is the police that investigate and it is the judge who passes the sentence. Prior to being sentenced, do not punish them (detainees) first. I speak from experience. Not even charged in court and (I) was beaten up almost half dead.

"So when people want to discuss their concerns about abuse in lock-ups, they do not need to convince me because I know what it feels like," he said.

"That is why we need to support all necessary efforts to protect those in custody although not everyone (arrested) with some injuries or dies in lock-up are a result of abuse by the police.

"This is why the matter requires a thorough study by Suhakam

and visits to lock-ups again."

On the freedom of expression, Anwar said, that while he recognised the right to speech for all citizens, it should be done responsibly failing which it might cause chaos in the country.

On issues related to 3R (race, religion and royalty), he said there were certain parties who accused the government of being cruel for disallowing them to speak up.

Refuting the claims, he said, there were no restrictions to speech but any form of incitement that stir unrest among the races would not be tolerated and stern action would be taken.

Touching on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Anwar said the masses needed to be enlightened on such policies before it being endorsed or it would result in undesirable reactions.

**> SEE NEXT PAGE**

# Anwar: Initiate discussions to educate the masses

## > FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"It is not an issue of not being committed to human rights but when the political elites decide to introduce a legislation without any consideration to initiate discussions to educate the masses and have them understand, then it will have negative reactions.

"People will be suspicious, thinking that their rights are being tampered with, their religious principles, cultural values and bumiputra interest will be at a disadvantage," said Anwar.

"This is why I said in Parliament that the proposal is not principally wrong but it is the way it is being bulldozed without any effort of inculcating better understanding to the masses.

"This is always the problem we face with the elites. They think they know best and dictate without any consideration to the feelings and concerns of the masses. It is claimed to be a universal principle, but according to whose narrative?" he said.

Also present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said and Suhakam chairman Datuk Seri Mohd Hishamudin Md Yunus.