



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim delivering his address at the closing of the Asean Law Forum 2025 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. NSTP PIC BY MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

LAW AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

'DON'T BASE IT SOLELY ON COURT DECISIONS'

Govt must balance liberties with country's fundamental principles, says Anwar

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LAW and institutional reforms must be examined comprehensively and not based solely on court decisions, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said institutional reforms must strike a balance between individual freedoms and the nation's fundamental principles so that they did not undermine harmony.

Anwar was commenting on Tuesday's Court of Appeal ruling that the words "annoy" and "offensive" in Section 233 of Communications and Multimedia Act were unconstitutional.

"The Court of Appeal ruled Section 233 unconstitutional, yet the government is appealing," he said after closing the Asean Law Forum 2025 here.

"How do you reconcile that move with the promises of institutional reform and protecting free speech?"

"Reforms must be studied comprehensively, not based solely on court decisions."

Anwar also cited the landmark Federal Court ruling last month which struck down the provision in the Peaceful Assembly Act that criminalises the failure to inform

police of an assembly.

"So we have to consider this. Even though we respect the Federal Court decision, sometimes, in the eagerness to exercise that freedom (of assembly), we offend certain positions and areas," he said.

Anwar said freedom of speech and assembly must be balanced with certain sensitivities, including the monarchy, which should not be infringed upon.

Earlier, Anwar said the government was considering re-establishing the Law Ministry to strengthen Malaysia's legal framework and enhance regional cooperation.

He said the proposal would bring greater coherence to the country's legal ecosystem and enable Malaysia to engage more effectively with its neighbours in advancing the rule of law.

"By aligning ourselves with the best practices of our neighbours, Malaysia will be better placed to shape a more just and responsive regional order," he said in his address at the closing of the forum.

Present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, her deputy, M. Kulasegaran, and Asean secretary-general Dr Kao Kim Hourn.

Anwar said inclusivity and sus-

tainability had been chosen as the central theme of Malaysia's Asean chairmanship this year, stressing that inclusivity meant the law must serve every individual, every community and every generation.

"Unity in Asean does not demand uniformity. Our diversity is our strength.

"Each of our nations carries its own legal traditions, cultural values and historical experiences, yet these differences enrich rather than divide us.

"Legal pluralism can thrive within a shared framework anchored in justice, respect and good governance.

"What binds us together is not sameness, but a collective will to ensure that our systems work in harmony for the greater good of our peoples.

"And, if we are to uphold this shared framework, then each nation must also summon the resolve to strengthen its own legal foundations, for only strong pillars at home can sustain a resilient edifice abroad."

Anwar added that Asean must continue to invest in mutual legal assistance, strengthen dispute resolution mechanisms, and confront new challenges posed by digital governance and the regulation of artificial intelligence.

"These are not abstract reforms. They are acts of trust-building, of ensuring that Asean remains relevant and resilient in a rapidly changing world."