

Billions spent but armed forces assets outdated: PM

> 'Malaysia must cut dependence on intermediaries, prioritise government-to-government agreements which provide accountability and help avoid political interference'

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PETALING JAYA: Billions have been spent on defence, yet Malaysia is still deploying ships from 1976 - a failure Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says is due to flawed procurement practices weakened by political interference and over-reliance on private agents.

He said Malaysia must cut its dependence on intermediaries and instead prioritise government-to-government agreements which provide greater accountability and help avoid political or personal interests.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, Anwar said the wasteful spending of the past had left the armed forces struggling with outdated equipment.

"Even ships from 1976 are still in service because we do not have enough vessels. Imagine that. Billions spent, but ships are lacking.

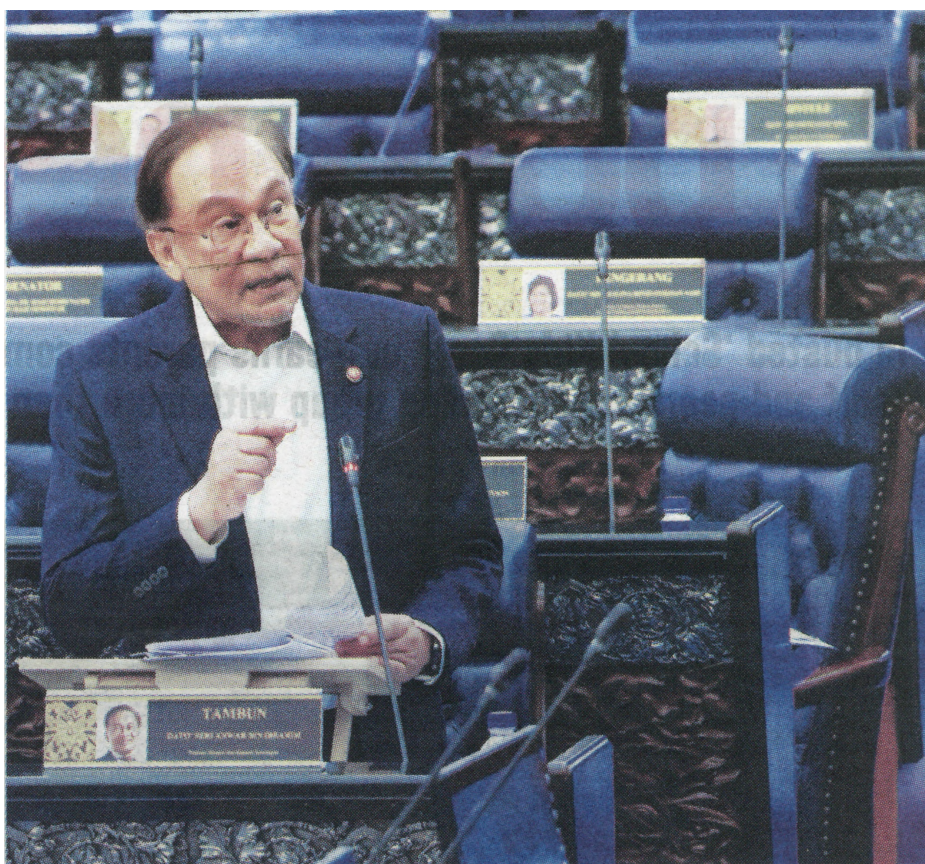
"Back then, I was still at Kamunting, and yet those ships are still being deployed today because there are no other ships available. This is a lesson for us."

Anwar said future procurements must involve proper negotiations, strict cost scrutiny and expert evaluation.

The outcry over outdated assets has reached the highest level, with His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia warning against putting servicemen in "flying coffins"!

Speaking at the Rejimen Gerak Khas 60th anniversary parade last week, the King reminded the Defence Ministry not to repeat past procurement blunders, citing the ill-fated Skyhawk aircraft deal, and urged greater transparency to prevent middlemen from inflating costs.

Anwar said Malaysia's defence budget had risen from RM3 billion in 2020 to RM5 billion in 2024 in response to mounting



Anwar stressing a point in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

geopolitical threats.

He cited the military build-up by the Philippines and the United States in southern Philippines, reportedly triggered by Chinese activity in the South China Sea.

On internal security concerns, Anwar cited recent incidents, including of a syndicate involving senior Malaysian Armed Forces officers leaking operational information.

He said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) uncovered bribery ranging from RM30,000 to RM50,000 per trip in that case.

"These are serious national security issues which I am treating with utmost priority. A comprehensive investigation into alleged leaks within the military's intelligence apparatus is already underway.

"If there are groups, akin to cartels, profiting by selling confidential information, this is a grave matter for the nation.

"Let a preliminary investigation be carried out. I have already briefed the Royal

Malaysian Air Force chief and the relevant parties, including the Intelligence Division director.

"I am awaiting the initial report but we will not cover up anything. If we begin compromising on breaches within our intelligence apparatus, it would be disastrous for the country."

Separately, Anwar addressed corruption allegations involving Sabah state assemblymen.

Responding to Beluran MP Datuk Seri Ronald Kiandee's question on why only two out of eight individuals implicated were charged, Anwar said MACC would only proceed with cases that are "substantive in facts and law".

He said video or voice recordings alone are insufficient without corroborative evidence.

He added that according to MACC, those who were charged are the ones against whom it is confident there is sufficient evidence and legal basis, not mere hearsay.