

APPROVAL LETTERS

PM slams 'hypocrisy' of Kelantan, Terengganu exco men

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday revealed two letters by Terengganu and Kelantan executive council (Exco) members seeking approval for certain matters, highlighting what he described as "hypocrisy" over the issue.

In the Dewan Rakyat, Anwar said the letters had explicitly sought approval, in contrast to a letter of consideration from his former political secretary.

While he did not disclose the name of the Kelantan exco member, he identified the Terengganu exco member as the chairman of the state's infrastructure, utilities and rural development committee, after being pressed by Datuk Rosol Wahid (PN-Terengganu) to do so.

"I have stated that I do not agree with... such letters, but we must differentiate. The letters in question, including those from officers in my office, listed six companies and requested that they be considered. This warrants a reprimand," Anwar said.

"What is not permissible is supporting or requesting that a company be granted approval. For example, a letter I received stated: 'I request that Datuk Seri consider approval for the procurement via direct negotiations.' That is not allowed; it breaches the regulations."

Anwar's remarks came in response to Datuk Mas Ermieyati Samsudin (PN-Masjid Tanah), who asked whether the govern-

ment would conduct an internal audit of ministers' officers following his earlier reminder for cabinet members to monitor their staff's conduct.

The prime minister stressed that forwarding or criticising a letter of consideration did not constitute an offence warranting dismissal.

He criticised the opposition for hypocrisy, saying they failed to mention letters from Kelantan and Terengganu exco members seeking approval, while making a major issue of a letter from his former political secretary.

"All ministers have done this before. When someone sends a letter, we cannot just keep it. It is forwarded and examined if requested. What is not acceptable, however, is to request approval, which was carried out by Kelantan and Terengganu," he said.

In **Kota Baru**, Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohamed Fadzli Hassan said he needed to verify the issue first.

"I cannot comment yet on the issue. I need to verify the letter first."

Meanwhile, the Terengganu exco member mentioned, Datuk Hanafiah Mat, who is also Cukai assemblyman, declined to comment, saying: "No comment. The procurement procedures have already been circulated."

Efforts to get comments from Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar were unsuccessful, as calls went unanswered.