

ANWAR DEFENDS A-G'S STATEMENT ON U.S. DEAL

A-G's views are repeatedly sought by cabinet, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has defended the Attorney-General's Chambers' (A-GC) statement on the United States trade agreement, rejecting claims it was politically motivated.

He said the A-G's views were sought repeatedly during cabinet meetings, as his primary role was to ensure no part of the agreement contradicted the Federal Constitution or Malaysian law.

"The A-G's statement was made after thorough examination. Don't say it is political," Anwar said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

"He reviews matters carefully, and this is his view on what can and cannot be done.

"He then defends his decision. What is wrong with that? What is political about it?"

Anwar was responding to Kota Baru member of parliament Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan, who had criticised the A-G's pub-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says the attorney-general's primary role is to ensure that the United States trade deal does not contravene the Federal Constitution or Malaysian law. BERNAMA PIC

lic statement that Malaysia had the right to terminate the agreement without requiring the US's consent.

He also questioned whether the government would release the A-G's review of the cabinet memorandum on the matter.

Anwar said various ministries and agencies had taken part in cabinet deliberations on the agreement, adding that: "If we believe something threatens our country's security, we cannot accept or adopt it."

Malaysia and the US signed the trade agreement on Oct 26 during the 47th Asean Summit here.

The deal seeks to renegotiate tariffs on Malaysian goods from 25 per cent to 19 per cent.

On Malaysia's development agenda, Anwar said the nation's progress must be guided by empathy and compassion, ensuring

no one was left behind, particularly in access to healthcare and education.

Speaking at the launch of the National Heart Institute University College, he said a country's greatness lies not only in economic growth or technological advancement, but also in the dignity and wellbeing of its people.

"In Islam, we call it *karamah insaniah*, or human dignity. Compassion must always exist, especially in medicine," he said. "That is why the two largest budget allocations are always for education and healthcare."

Present were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar, Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir and Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad. **Additional reporting by Qistina Sallehuddin**