

GROWING CONCERNS

'YOUTH STEPPING UP AMID ERODING TRUST'

Gen Z protests show their will no longer insignificant, says PM

ADDIS ABABA

THE growing concerns about declining trust in institutions, digital misinformation and uneven

political participation have led to the youth coming forward as champions of transparency, civic responsibility and inclusive policymaking.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said youths were unfortunately not treated as equal participants in the political process in large parts of the world.

This, he said, exacerbated perceptions that governments were out-of-touch and could not effectively address critical challenges.

"The recent wave of Gen Z protests in several countries has made it clear that the will of the youth is no longer insignificant and their prioritisation of good governance has increased," he said at a special lecture at the Afro-Malaysia Youth Forum

here yesterday.

"Likewise, there is also their concern about climate change, economic inequality and violations of human rights. Hence, it is most encouraging to see the youth pushing for policy initiatives to drive changes in these areas."

He said the rise of Global South economies brought both responsibility and opportunity to shape a more inclusive international order.

"But we must not wait for change to happen around us. We must be the architects of that change. And by we, I mean you, the youth of today and the future. Who else could be the best and most instrumental agents of change but the youth?"

Anwar said in the key areas of global governance and social progress, the youth could advocate for more inclusive structures that prioritised their voices in decision-making processes.

He said the youth everywhere, including in Malaysia, were the masters of digital tools and technology to push for greater participatory democracy and remind the administration the importance of transparency and accountability.

The youth are the movers of change, and society should harness their energy, creativity, and drive. This global phenomenon should provide a wake-up call for governments around the world to improve the way business is done, and to cater more meaningfully to the needs of the youth."

He said Southeast Asia and Africa were well placed to further strengthen long-standing ties rooted in trade, movement of its peoples, and shared ideals for anti-colonialism and non-alignment.

"We must build bridges: through bilateral partnerships, cooperation between Asean and the African Union, and coordinated action at multilateral platforms.

"Whatever the form, our cooperation must be grounded in principle and guided by purpose.

"Asean-African Union relations must move beyond symbolism and take shape through genuine, people-centred cooperation.

"While existing frameworks and initiatives offer a foundation, both regions must be more proactive in creating mechanisms based on shared priorities — rooted in our own experiences of resilience, reform and renewal."