

# ART does not undermine Malaysian laws, says Anwar

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) between Malaysia and the United States contains no provisions that contradict the spirit or any articles of the Federal Constitution, assures Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) plays a crucial role in reviewing all national agreements, including the one signed with the United States, to ensure they comply with Malaysian laws.

The enforcement of the agreement cannot override the constitution or any local laws, he added.

"The Cabinet's discussions and decisions are often refined after receiving input from the AGC.

"Even in the final stages, the AGC's reviews remain necessary," said Anwar during Prime Minister's Question Time at the Dewan Rakyat.

He was responding to a supplementary question from Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan (PN-Kota Baru) who wanted to know whether the ART had been reviewed by the AGC prior to the signing.

"The Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry led the negotiations. When the discussions involve halal matters, Jakim (Islamic Development Department) steps in; when they concern imports, the Agriculture Ministry is involved," Anwar explained.

He urged Takiyuddin and all parties to read all of the provisions of the agreement in full to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding.

Citing the text of the agreement, Anwar said both parties are allowed to act in cases involving unfair trade practices, import surges or to protect their economic or national security interests.

No form of enforcement under the trade pact can override Malaysia's laws, he added.

The Prime Minister pointed to three key points under the agreement - the timeline, shared economic interests and issues related to national security concerns.

"If we feel that our national security is compromised, we will not accept it.

"Everything is guided by the principle of goodwill and shared commitment to strengthen bilateral relations," he said.

The Prime Minister also dismissed allegations that Malaysia had surrendered, betrayed or been subjected to a new form of colonialism after signing the ART.