

# PM: NO COVER-UP FOR SCHOOL BULLIES

Anwar warns that shielding perpetrators to protect school's image an offence

NORAIN MOHAMED RADHI  
PUTRAJAYA  
ainradhi@nst.com.my

**P**RIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday issued a stern reminder to schools not to conceal bullying cases to protect their image, stressing that shielding perpetrators, even in small cases, is an offence.

He said some school administrators prioritised preserving their institutions' reputation over students' safety, warning that this practice must stop immediately as they only aggravate the problem.

"Headmasters, parents and teachers must cooperate fully. One of the problems is when administrators hide bullying incidents to protect the school's good name.

"But protecting perpetrators is a crime. It is tantamount to covering up wrongdoing," he said after performing Friday prayers at Surau Jannatul Firdaus, PPAM Seruling, yesterday.

Anwar said he heard such concerns directly from students during recent visits, adding that even seemingly minor bullying inci-



*Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim*

dents should not be ignored.

"Just because the bullying seems minor doesn't make it acceptable. Ignoring small incidents allows them to escalate. This isn't about blaming anyone, but about fostering shared awareness."

He reminded teachers to exercise caution when disciplining students, urging them to avoid physical punishment.

"Don't resort to hitting or striking students to the point of injury," he said, adding that though some human rights groups might be too rigid to the point that teachers feel they could not reprimand students, discipline should still be applied within strict boundaries.

On another matter, Anwar said the government was studying a proposal to prohibit children under 16 from using smartphones in schools, following a cabinet discussion on school safety and the rise in student-related crime.

"The influence of social media

and online games can sometimes lead to criminal behaviour.

"So, we are considering a ban on smartphones for those aged 16 and below. The proposal is still under review, but many countries have already implemented similar measures."

Anwar also announced plans to enhance school safety, with the police and the Home Ministry expected to play a more active role alongside teachers.

"Monitoring school safety cannot rest solely on teachers. Police will step up their involvement."

He said the government was also looking into introducing ethical education content for parents and Parent-Teacher Associations to promote student wellbeing.

"We have four to five million students and recurring disciplinary problems are worrying."

Anwar said although many students receive religious education, including at tahfiz and Islamic schools, awareness and understanding of moral values remained inconsistent, an issue now under review by the government.

He said Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek would announce details on these initiatives soon.

"Principals, teachers and parents must give full cooperation. Education must not only produce academic excellence, but also instil moral and Madani values."

He said decisions involving children must not be made hastily, but through thorough study and deliberation.