

PM: REFORMS KEY TO A STRONGER DEMOCRACY

These will ensure Parliament functions independently, says Anwar

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MALAYSIA'S introduction of the Parliamentary Services Act and Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT) radical shift towards strengthening democratic accountability through Parliament.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the reforms marked a decisive step in ensuring Parliament functions independently and effectively, with greater space for scrutiny, debate and accountability.

"Giving meaning to what we consider democratic accountability is to allow reasoned discourse in our House of Representatives or parliaments. And that means having fully functioning, critical and competent speakers at the national or local assemblies.

"By democratic accountability, we mean allowing for healthy exchanges and discourse, whether in forums, committees or assemblies, with a focus on national development and people's welfare." He said this in his keynote address at the 46th Asean Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly.

Present were AIPA president and Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul, and AIPA secretary-general Siti Roza-imeriyanty Abdul Rahman.

Anwar said the Parliamentary Services Act, tabled in the Dewan Rakyat in March and passed with bipartisan support, was a landmark reform that freed Parliament from government management, granting it full institutional independence.

"It is an outstanding achievement. Parliament has become independent of governmental management.

"I commend the speaker for pressing the cabinet to make this a priority and finally table it for approval," he said.

He added that the reform was supported by ruling and opposi-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim officiating at the launch of the Youth Parliament Programme in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. The programme is part of the 46th Asean Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). With him is AIPA president and Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul (left), BERNAMA PIC

tion parties, reflecting a shared commitment to stronger institutions.

He highlighted the establishment of a series of select committees, made up of government and opposition members, to enhance checks and balances.

He acknowledged the challenges of his current role, contrasting it with his years as opposition leader.

"It was easier to perform in Parliament as opposition leader than as prime minister, because now you are held accountable and must answer difficult questions, sometimes in rancorous exchanges.

"But our hope is for members of parliament to set a good example — to engage in reasoned discourse with decorum."

He said this spirit of accountability, reinforced through the Parliamentary Services Act and PMQT, was vital in ensuring that Malaysia's democratic institutions remained effective and credible.

On March 5, the Dewan Rakyat passed the Parliamentary Services Bill 2025, granting Parliament autonomy to determine its own policies and governance for the first time in 33 years.

The bill's passing marked a major milestone in the institutional reform efforts championed by the government, aimed at restoring the country's administration by enabling Parliament to function as an independent institution.

Meanwhile, the PMQT was first introduced in the Dewan Rakyat on Feb 13, 2023, with Anwar responding directly to questions posed by MPs.

The prime minister said the

growing openness of parliaments to traditional and social media gave the public direct access to proceedings, placing greater responsibility on lawmakers to guide understanding rather than exploit issues for political mileage.

He said such transparency was central to democratic accountability, but cautioned that the same access which empowered citizens could also mislead if leaders acted irresponsibly.

"Most parliaments, including Malaysia's, are open to the media — particularly now through social media — because members can present their case directly.

"But citizens, especially young people and students, must be guided to monitor both sides of the debate so they can assess the arguments and draw their own conclusions," he said.

However, he warned that social media also carried risks if misused, and that the responsibility was shared by all parliamentarians, whether in government or opposition.

"In the realm of social media, people can sometimes be misled. Notwithstanding that, our duty is to perform to the best of our ability, to honour our commitments and our oath of office," he said.

Meanwhile, Johari said Parliament must remain the bastion of democracy, safeguarding trust between citizens and their leaders.

He said regional parliaments carried the responsibility of preserving transparency and accountability, warning that if they failed, the very foundation of governance would be shaken.