

Listen to Gen Z voices, says Anwar

Protests in other countries show the importance of having dialogue with youths

KUALA LUMPUR: Amid escalating "Gen Z" protests in several Asian countries, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has urged Asean leaders to listen to the voices and concerns of the youth.

This, said the Prime Minister, is to avoid the perception that the government is only looking after the elites or its own interests - a factor which has brought down several governments in the past.

"In these turbulent times, we must consider the role of the youth, their concerns, job security (among others).

"This is not just what Malaysia is doing now. I believe we will continue doing this in the future," he said, addressing the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Assembly.

Anwar said Asean has become

a good platform for women and youth representatives to express their views on current issues.

"I think not many countries do this. In every Asean leadership function, we sit down and listen to the deliberation of the youth. Leaders practically shut up and listen to the expression of the young," he said.

Anwar -quipped it was fortunate that Malaysian youths now are more "tamed" compared to his younger days as an activist.

"Fortunately, our youth is more moderate compared to when I was young. They express themselves but they do it politely" he said.

Anwar said the role of Parliament and legislative assemblies is to ensure that elected offi-

cially truly listen and represent the aspirations of the people.

"We have seen governments fade because there is a tendency for those in power to amass wealth and accept systemic corruption as a way of life," he added.

The recent protests in Timor-Leste, Nepal and Indonesia have been named "Gen Z" protests as it is predominantly organised by students and youths.

Anwar also told delegates that democracy is more than just about voting at the ballot box, but about publicly questioning and assessing decisions taken by the ruling government at all times.

He said this will ensure elected officials and the government remain publicly accountable.

"Democracy is not just about

elections every four to five years. Democracy is about a system that allows the ruling party to be questioned, criticised and assessed by the public," he said.

To foster democratic accountability, Malaysia embarked on reforms, which saw the introduction of the Parliamentary Services Act (PSA) and Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT), he said.

Describing it as an outstanding achievement, he said the PSA received bipartisan support and allows Parliament to be totally independent from government management.

Anwar also said Parliamentary Select Committees consisting of government backbenchers and Opposition MPs were established during his tenure.

"I must say, it was easier to perform in Parliament as Opposition leader, than to perform as Prime Minister. You are held accountable and you have to undertake difficult questions and exchanges on very contentious issues."

The PSA was passed by the Dewan Rakyat on March 5, which grants Parliament the autonomy to manage its own operations.

PMQT, introduced during the 15th Parliament sitting in Feb 2023, is where the Prime Minister will answer three questions either on Tuesday or Thursday.

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