



On The Beat WONG CHUN WAI

IT was certainly a good start for the new year when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced a fresh set of reform moves last week, signalling the need to fast track the changes.

During his three years in power, Anwar has faced persistent criticism that his reform agenda, once synonymous with urgency and moral purpose, has been slow.

He has found - to his chagrin - that when you are heading a government with 18 partners and your party does not have the largest number of seats, there will be many stumbling blocks.

Coalition arithmetic, bureaucratic inertia and the need for political stability to ensure the Unity Government does not collapse are serious concerns that he has to grapple with in the real political world.

His opponents have attacked Anwar for allegedly being trapped by the very system he once vowed to dismantle, prioritising coalition management over transformation.

Unfortunately, the idealistic PKR faithful and voters are not likely to care or be interested in the details of such compromises. All they know is that their hopes and expectations have not been met as fast as they would like.

But the significance of his Jan 5 announcement lies less in the fine print of policy and more in the message embedded in the moment.

It is best understood as a deliberate political reset: a reassertion that reform remains central to his leadership, and that 2026 will be defined by acceleration rather than hesitation.

For much of his tenure, Anwar has governed under the shadow of his own legacy.

Reformasi is not merely a campaign slogan; it is a political identity forged through decades of struggle, imprisonment, and public expectation.

While it grants Anwar unparalleled credibility on reform, it also magnifies disappointment when progress appears incremental or delayed.

Supporters who rallied behind him did not expect easy change - but they did expect visible momentum.

After three years, the Unity Government has remained intact. There is no danger of a collapse.

The Opposition has not attempted to move any motion to remove Anwar beyond the "Turun Anwar" protests to keep themselves relevant simply because they know that they don't have the numbers.

Perikatan Nasional's direction remains

Anwar's fast-track reform push starts early

With his announcement of a raft of reforms, the Prime Minister has seized the narrative initiative for the new year. Now, critics have little to complain about and coalition partners have a direction to follow.



The PM's announcement that all Malaysian adults aged 18 years old and above will receive the second round one-off SARA aid is welcomed news.



Anwar's greatest political test in 2026 will not be whether he can announce reform, but whether he can sustain it when resistance emerges. — Bernama

uncertain after Bersatu president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and his supporters quit their coalition posts and passed the problem to PAS.

Within Bersatu, MPs aligned with deputy president Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin have been targeted and face disciplinary action, including sackings.

But for Malaysia's unity government, structural reform in areas such as governance, subsidies, or institutional independence inevitably creates winners and losers.

On that front, Anwar has struggled to convince a sceptical public that reform is moving fast enough.

However, by acting on Jan 5, before the narrative of race and religion resumes, before Parliament settles into routine, before crisis dictates agenda, and before critics can frame the year as another exercise in delay - Anwar has seized the narrative initiative.

He is no longer responding defensively to accusations of slowness; he is defining

the year on his own terms.

The message is unmistakable: reform is not something to be revisited later in the term, but the organising principle of governance in 2026.

An early-year announcement signals confidence and intent. In short, the narrative is that the PM is willing to spend political capital rather than hoard it. When reforms are announced late, they are seen as tactical - designed to placate voters ahead of elections.

When they are announced early, they appear strategic, even ideological. That distinction matters for credibility.

From a purely political standpoint, this early start is a good tactical move. Reform takes time, not just to legislate, but also to implement, communicate, and normalise.

Coalition partners who might quietly resist change find it harder to do so when reform is publicly framed as a priority from the outset of the year.

In that sense, Jan 5 was not just a signal to voters, but a disciplining mechanism for the coalition itself.

But Anwar has to make sure that this acceleration has to materialise in clear timelines, measurable benchmarks, and visible enforcement. It should not be mere promises.

An early start also raises expectations; failing to meet them would reinforce the very narrative he is trying to escape.

Anwar's greatest political test in 2026 will not be whether he can announce reform, but whether he can sustain it when resistance emerges - from within institutions, from vested interests, and even from allies.

He does not need to call for an early election this year although the temptation is there with the opposition in disarray.

The current ground remains uncertain as there are many grievances, especially the increasing cost of living.

But the PM's announcement that all Malaysian adults aged 18 years old and above will receive the second round one-off Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (Sara) RM100 credit on Feb 9, 2026, is welcomed

Madani reform pledges

On Jan 5, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced a series of initiatives to boost the economy and address cost of living issues as well plans for new legislation aimed at strengthening institutional reforms.

- Bill to limit a prime minister to two terms (10 years) in office
- Bill to separate the powers of the attorney-general and the public prosecutor
- The Freedom of Information Bill
- Bill to establish an ombudsman law
- An increase to judges' salaries
- Salary adjustment for civil servants
- Expansion of digital government services
- Monthly Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (Sara) financial aid to eligible recipients, up to RM200
- Jualan Rahmah Madani sales three times a month in every constituency
- RM150 cash aid per child, up to Form 6 students
- Eligible families to receive cash aid up to RM500 in stages under Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) Phase 1
- One-off Sara financial aid of RM100 to all Malaysians 18 years old and above
- * Chinese vernacular schools (SJKC) to receive RM80 million
- Tamil vernacular schools (SJKT) to receive RM50 million
- Tax and regulatory reforms for SMEs
- Postponement of e-invoicing to 2027 for firms earning RM5mil and below

Source: The Star

news.

Sara is a cash aid from the government which is utilised to purchase essential goods at participating supermarkets and retail outlets.

Anwar has two more years to go and that is still plenty of time. There is no reason why he should not go for the full term. It would be better that he does so, while focusing on fulfilling these reforms.

So is the extension to 2027 for the implementation of e-invoices for businesses with an annual turnover of below RMS million a year. It will bring relief to many as this is a hugely unpopular move for many small businesses.

In fact, the entire process should be ended for these small businesses.

If he succeeds, Jan 5 may be remembered not as another announcement, but as the moment reform finally reclaimed the driver's seat of Malaysian politics.

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