

'Audits constructive tool for national progress'

> Anwar encourages outreach to ensure process no longer seen as intimidating

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday said audits must not be seen as a burden on the public but as a constructive tool for national progress. He urged auditors to engage more closely with citizens and help them understand the purpose of scrutiny.

Speaking at the launch of the National Audit Department's 120th anniversary celebrations, Anwar said public engagement is crucial to ensuring audits are viewed as a means of strengthening governance rather than merely an enforcement exercise.

"Sometimes, the systems we introduce are perceived as overly burdensome or cumbersome. Every time we introduce reforms aimed at improvement, they are often opposed by those accustomed to inefficiency or irregularities.

"So, how do we introduce new systems without making individuals feel oppressed or overly constrained?"

"This requires the auditor-general and the entire department to engage with, understand and show empathy towards the public. I consider this crucial."

Also present were Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul and Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

Anwar emphasised that auditing must be communicated as an empowering process.

"I do not want the perception that auditing systems are burdensome.

"Auditing must be explained as a way to improve systems, protect funds and benefit the public."

He added that the true measure of a robust audit system lies in how effectively it reaches out to and educates citizens.

He also warned that gaps between policy intentions and public understanding could undermine reform efforts.

"Good intentions and good programmes that are poorly understood due to insufficient engagement could lead to tension and public anxiety.

"That is why I urge these efforts to continue. I know steps have been taken and I am proud of the performance of the National Audit Department"

He further encouraged innovation and outreach, particularly at the grassroots level, to ensure auditing is no longer perceived as intimidating.

He said safeguarding the nation also requires audit systems that are advanced and comprehensive.

He called for faster and more effective audits to curb leakages, mismanagement and abuse of power.

"A strong and professional audit system is central to good governance and public accountability.

"If auditing is carried out effectively and promptly, it becomes difficult for leakages to occur. But weaknesses or delays would allow misuse of funds and abuse of power to continue."

Anwar added that national progress should not just be measured solely by economic growth, but also by the strength of management and governance, with auditing serving as a key benchmark

Acknowledging that strict auditing would not always be popular, he said resistance is inevitable when checks and 'controls are tightened.

"If there are no checks, then it is not auditing. We must take firmer and braver steps to ensure that the country stays on the right path.

"This requires commitment and a collective spirit from all parties.

"If we want to achieve a level of progress that we could be proud of, we have no choice but to mobilise all our strengths and drive change in the best possible way."