



## A TASTE OF FESTIVITIES

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim stopping by a stall selling Indian sweets in Batu Caves yesterday during his visit to check out preparations for Thaipusam, which takes place tomorrow. NSTP PIC BY ASYRAF HAMZAH

## 'HEADS MUST ROLL'

# Decisive action must follow Anwar's ultimatum, say experts

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Warnings are not enough and "heads must roll" if the government is serious about cleaning up the civil service, says Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M).

TI-M president Raymon Ram, responding to an ultimatum by the prime minister to enforcement chiefs, said no agency head had so far been removed or charged for corruption committed during their tenure despite persistent criticism of certain departments for misconduct, abuse of power and cartel activities.

"Often, people are merely transferred to continue rotting a different barrel of apples, under the notion that transfers amount to punishment," he told the *New Straits Times*.

"If PMX (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) wants the public and the international community to believe his warning is not mere rhetoric, he must begin terminating and charging errant public servants, while transparently disclosing the reasons for action.

"This must be followed by appointing replacements who are not only clean, but also capable."

On Wednesday, Anwar gave senior enforcement heads one week to perform their duties or step aside for reassignment.

Raymon said the lack of decisive action against corrupt officials would erode public trust in the government and negatively impact the country's score and ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index.

"It would also perpetuate Malaysia's 'legacy' of kickbacks, cartels, cash-for-promotion and a



(From left) Raymon Ram, Pushpan Murugiah and Professor Dr Mohd Mizan Mohammad Aslam

settled culture within civil service and law enforcement."

Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism chief executive officer Pushpan Murugiah agrees.

He said while the warning might send a strong political signal, it risked remaining rhetorical unless followed by concrete institutional and legal action.

The warning could also create only momentary pressure, as enforcement weaknesses were structural and not merely behavioural.

"They stem from overlapping mandates, weak independence, selective enforcement and the absence of clear accountability mechanisms for enforcement leadership.

"A one-week deadline is, therefore, unlikely to produce meaningful reform. At best, it may result in cosmetic compliance — internal memos, public assurances or short-term activity spikes.

"Without transparent benchmarks, independent oversight and consequences anchored in law, such deadlines tend to incentivise box-ticking rather than genuine accountability."

Pushpan said there was a need

for clear performance indicators for enforcement heads, independent review mechanisms and statutory safeguards, including fixed terms, transparent appointment and removal processes, and parliamentary oversight.

Critically, he said, enforcement agencies must be insulated from political interference.

National Defence University of Malaysia defence and security expert Professor Dr Mohd Mizan Mohammad Aslam said Anwar had proven he was not merely engaging in rhetoric.

The challenge, he said, lay with those who remained resistant to change.

Mizan said the recent charges against top military men showed the government's seriousness, in line with the tone set by the king.

He said some in senior positions were there largely due to seniority and were merely waiting for retirement, hence a lack of drive to improve their departments.

The one week given by Anwar was meant for heads of departments to at least show that they had taken steps to make improvements, he added.

## HIGH-PROFILE GRAFT PROBES

# MINISTERS WARNED TO TOE THE LINE

Fahmi: PM reminded them to uphold integrity and not take unwanted actions

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**A**LL cabinet ministers have been reminded to uphold integrity and avoid any "unwanted actions", said Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

This comes as law enforcement agencies press ahead with several high-profile graft investigations, including one involving the Department of Environment (DoE).

Speaking after a cabinet meeting, Fahmi said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had again highlighted the importance of enforcement and safeguarding public confidence in institutions.

"The prime minister has reminded all cabinet ministers to ensure that integrity is maintained and that no unwanted actions are taken," he said during his weekly press conference here yesterday.

Fahmi said concerns had been raised over certain enforcement actions that were perceived as unhelpful and risked undermining trust in public institutions.

However, he added that the cabinet had not interfered in any of the investigations, which were being carried out independently.

"These are actions by the authorities, such as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, and the cabinet has not intervened in this issue.

"We fully entrust it to the authorities to take action," he said.

Fahmi said Anwar had also instructed authorities to step up enforcement against foreigners who misuse social visit passes to work in Malaysia.

He said the directive was raised following recent enforcement operations and concerns over visa abuses that could affect local employment.

"The prime minister has asked for stronger action against foreigners who misuse their social passes or violate their visas to work. They will be subjected to strict action."



Datuk Fahmi Fadzil

He added that the Home Ministry had briefed the cabinet on the scale of recent operations, revealing that from January last year to the middle of this month, 54,791 people had been screened nationwide.

Of that number, 51,100 cases were recorded in 2025, and 3,691 in the first half of this month.

Fahmi said the screenings were part of broader efforts to curb the number of visitors entering Malaysia for tourism or social purposes but later engaging in unauthorised work.

While breakdowns by nationality were available, he said further details should be referred to the Home Ministry.

On another matter, the minister said the government had signalled positive progress in its engagement with education stakeholders regarding the mandatory implementation of Bahasa Melayu (BM) and History subjects in schools.

Fahmi said the Education Ministry briefed the cabinet yesterday on meetings with representatives from international schools, Maa-had Tahfiz institutions and the United Chinese School Committees' Association.

The discussions follow Anwar's announcement that Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia BM and History would be compulsory for all Malaysian students in all education streams.

The move prompted queries from various groups, including those linked to the Unified Examination Certificate.