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Anwar-Bakun

GOVT NOT SHIRKING RESPONSIBILITY ON BAKUN, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today dismissed the notion held by some people that the government was pandering to the wishes of the private company selected to build the Bakun hydroelectric dam.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the government had set up a special committee and a task force to coordinate the implementation of the massive project.

A leading engineering consultant from the United States, Harza Engineering International, had also been appointed to help the government evaluate the proposals submitted by the developer Ekran Berhad, he said.

"I wish to stress that while the company has been given the responsibility (to build the project), it is not allowed to take any action or implement any stage of the project without getting the government's agreement," he said.

He was opening a one-day seminar which was organised by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department here to provide interested parties, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with information on the RM15 billion project.

Anwar said a Reevaluation Board comprising the world's renowned experts in this field had also been formed to ensure the dam was built properly and safely.

He also disclosed the findings of the Reevaluation Board in its preliminary assessment of the project. They include:

- + that the hydrology, geology and site topography are favourable for a major hydro development;

- + that the design of the dam and its adaption to the foundation rock provide for an inherently safe dam, and

- + that the project layout and selection of structures conform to current practice and provide for a satisfactory power project.

Anwar said the board also concluded that "seismicity is not a significant issue at this site and concrete face rockfill dam is highly resistant to seismicity loading".

It also found that the six-year implementation schedule is reasonable.

Anwar also addressed the concern expressed by some parties that the building of the dam would involve the flooding of an area of 69,000 hectares or about the size of Singapore.

"We should realise that we will gazette a catchment area covering 1.5 million hectares which may not have been created if the Bakun project is not implemented," said Anwar, who is Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Bakun.

He said the government would ensure that the catchment area was managed properly.

Anwar said the government would not overlook the interests of villagers affected by the project. He said the resettlement scheme proposed by the Sarawak government was satisfactory, including in terms of compensation.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would meet the affected residents during his visit to Sarawak later this week.

Anwar told reporters later that Ekran had been asked to abide by federal and state laws and regulations when implementing the project or it would face action.

The company was also asked to be mindful of the local content for

products and services used in implementing the project, he said. -- Bernama
AZZ YBY