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Anwar-Mara

MARA-SPONSORED STUDENTS WILL STILL GET SCHOLARSHIPS, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA KUBU BAHARU, Jan 12 (bernama) -- Mara sponsored students will continue to get their scholarships, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

However, Mara would not give new scholarships if it did not have sufficient funds, he said.

"We do not want Mara-sponsored students to be affected in their studies...therefore their scholarships will continue," he told reporters after visiting the Rantau Panjang Forest Reserve low-cost housing project site in Mukim Serendah, near here.

He was commenting on Mara's recent announcement that it would stop giving scholarships and bursaries to those seeking to further their education.

Anwar said the move had raised many questions as if the government had stopped the allocation which was not so.

"This is not true...it was due to problems during planning and management," Anwar said, adding that the problems did not involve Mara's present chairman.

Anwar said the planning was not good and certain aspects were not disclosed.

"What is explained is that there are insufficient funds... several decisions made which did not involve the present chairman were not disclosed," he said.

He said the Cabinet had discussed Mara's financial position and the Entrepreneur Development Minister had provided the explanation.

Anwar said the situation arose from Mara's previous budgets which were too lax with no references made to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) as well as the Public Services Department and the Finance Ministry.

"I'm not saying that the budget is proper or not but the regulations are incorrect," he said, adding that the Treasury would definitely refuse to provide additional funds for projects it was not informed of.

"This is what has happened...all Mara's funds including its reserves were used for projects...now it has reached a situation where Mara is unable to continue to pay the scholarship money and the funds for the projects are also affected," he said.

Anwar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Cabinet had directed that audits be done to ensure that Mara adhered to its financial and administrative regulations and referred to the federal agencies like the other agencies.

"I have told the Entrepreneur Development Minister that if there is an assurance that such problems will not recur and all new projects will be properly scrutinised, we will give our cooperation," he said.

For the time being, the Treasury had been directed to study Mara's projects which should be continued including the giving of scholarships to existing recipients.

On the more than RM200 million of workers' money with the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) which could not be credited into their respective accounts due to various problems, Anwar said it was one of the issues discussed in his visit to the organisation.

Anwar said he would let the EPF study the matter before making comments. -- Bernama