

PKR lauds Ghani's 'timely reminder' on bumiputera

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By Terence Netto

Sarawak PKR chief Baru Bian welcomed as a "breath of fresh air" former Johor menteri besar Ghani Othman's reminder that measures to alleviate the economic position of bumiputra must include those who fall under the category in Sarawak and Sabah.

"I welcome the reminder by Ghani that what measures the prime minister will unveil tomorrow should include in its target groups not only bumiputra on the peninsula but also those in Sarawak and Sabah," said the Ba' Kelalan state assemblyperson when reacting to Ghani's proposition, aired in the latter's capacity as chairman of the bumiputra agenda committee.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is scheduled to announce tomorrow a raft of measures to boost the economic position of the bumiputra.

Live television coverage of the announcement presupposes the weight and depth of the measures

Lawyer Baru (right) said Ghani's reminder was "timely" because people in Sarawak and Sabah will commemorate the 50th anniversary of both territories' merger with Malaya and Singapore to make the Federation of Malaysia in 1963.

"The promises made to our forefathers about the better prospects for economic advancement of the two territories upon their merger with the federation have yet to be fulfilled despite the passage of a half century," said Baru.

Out of sight, out of mind

"The bumiputra of Sarawak and Sabah, especially in the interior, continue to languish in poverty.

"In fact, they can be found in large numbers in the 60% of Malaysians whose household income are barely above the realistic levels marking a household as poor," noted Baru.

He said that because the poor of Sarawak and Sabah located deep in the interior, they are "largely out of sight and so out of mind" of development planners.

"You can infer this from the national educational blueprint recently unveiled - there's not a word about improving the pitiful condition of schools in the interior of Sarawak and Sabah," he argued.

the antidote article sarawak native logging school children 280409 06He said one cannot speak of advancing education in Malaysia when large numbers of school kids are forced to study in conditions that make the imbibing of knowledge a matter of the triumph of the spirit over adverse surroundings.

"That is why Ghani's reminder that economic programmes for the benefit of bumiputra must include those from Sarawak and Sabah is most welcome because they not only merit aid by reason of their category as bumiputra but also because promises made to them have gone unfulfilled for so long. This is deplorable," said Baru.

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