

PM calls for no more excuses over delays in Sabah development projects

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim today said that there should be no more excuses for delays in the development of projects for Sabahans, especially pertaining to water and electricity supplies, as well as the Pan Borneo Highway.

He said this needs to be emphasised as there are delayed development projects in the state, including the Ulu Padas Hydroelectric Dam, which can provide a comfortable electricity and water supply for the people, if expedited.

“Delayed projects have two consequences - the cost will be increased and the hope of the people who longed for those facilities, especially electricity and water supply, will be crushed.

“For this dam project, for example, make sure the implementation and monitoring are being carried out. There should be no more excuses for delays.

“This (project) is urgent and critical, so let’s get it done faster and give comfort to the people,” he said when officiating the ground-breaking ceremony for the dam

project today.

Present were Chief Minister Hajiji Noor, Deputy Chief Minister Jeffrey Kitingan, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Sabah, Sarawak Affairs and Special Functions) Armizan Mohd Ali, and Sabah Energy Corporation Sdn Bhd (SEC) chairperson Annuar Ayub.

The Ulu Padas Hydroelectric Dam, which is expected to be completed in 2029 with a cost of RM4 billion, has a power supply capacity of 187.5 megawatts. A study is underway for a water supply of 6,000 million litres per day.

The dam, with a reservoir area of 1,905sqkm, is being developed by UPP Holdings Sdn Bhd, established through a strategic collaboration between SEC, a government subsidiary, Gamuda Berhad, and Kerjaya Kagum Hitech JV Sdn Bhd.

Sabah way behind on highway project

Anwar said apart from the dam, the Sabah Pan Borneo Highway project is also facing delays due to contractor issues and political interference.

“These issues need to be swiftly resolved to provide the best transportation facilities for the people.

“Let’s be more transparent. The Pan Borneo Highway project has been ongoing for decades, it is nearly completed in Sarawak. RM15 billion for this project is not cheap. I want Works Minister Alexander Nanta Linggi to monitor and delegate power to expedite (the project),” he added.

Besides benefiting the people, Anwar said these essential facilities are crucial in attracting investors.

Highest allocation

The prime minister also hit out at opposition leaders who claimed that the federal government was not giving due attention to Sabah by comparing what the federal government provides to the state with developments in Penang.

“They claim that Penang has a RM10 billion LRT project. That project is funded by the private sector, not the federal government... don't play with such sentiments that divide our people,” he said.

Anwar said his coalition government is working hard to bring development to the state for the benefit of the people.

He pointed out that in Budget 2024, RM6.8 billion in development expenditure was allocated for Sabah, while only RM1.4 billion for Penang.

The allocation for Sabah is the highest in the country's history, demonstrating the federal government's concern for the Land Below the Wind.

"What's the total allocation (including for operation expenditure) for Sabah? More than RM16 billion! The highest among the states, but the opposition is still criticising me; asking why we give more to Sabah and I have answered this in Parliament.

"I said it is because Sabah is seriously lagging in water and electricity supply," he said.

As the prime minister, Anwar said it is his responsibility to ensure the development of all states, but the development of projects in Sabah needs to be given attention as the state is lagging behind other states in the peninsula.

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