

Anwar: RM16b for Sabah total funds for 2024, not just development

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has clarified that the RM16 billion he announced for Sabah during the Kaamatan Festival on May 31 is the total allocation for the state this year, not just for development projects.

The amount covers various expenditures including schools, education, border security, and overall state development, he said.

Anwar dismissed allegations that he had been deceptive about the allocation, urging all parties, particularly leaders he considers friends, to seek accurate information or ask him directly before making public statements.

“It is not just RM6.6 billion (allocations for Sabah as alleged), as the RM6.6 billion is solely for development... so who pays the teachers (salaries), repair the roads and maintain border security?”

“Those are all included in the RM16 billion. Some even suggested that adding (the digit 1) in front makes it RM16 billion. That is incorrect.

“If you want to be a friend, act like one. There must be decorum when it comes to friendship. You don’t need to thank us, just show a little appreciation. If (the allocation) is not sufficient, we can negotiate, and ask for more in a friendly manner,” he said in his speech at the Sabah PKR Convention today.

Also present were Chief Minister Hajiji Noor, who is also Gabungan Rakyat Sabah chairperson, Sabah Pakatan Harapan chairperson Christina Liew, Sabah BN chairperson Bung Moktar Radin, United Progressive Kinabalu Organisation president Ewon Benedick, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs) president Arthur Joseph Kurup and Sabah PKR chairperson Mustapha Sakmud.

On May 31, during his speech at the closing ceremony of the 2024 Kaamatan Festival in Penampang, Anwar said since becoming prime minister, he has continuously worked to increase the allocation for Sabah to assist its people, raising it from RM12.9 billion in 2022 to RM16 billion this year.

He said last year, the federal government allocated RM13.9 billion to the state, demonstrating its commitment through close cooperation with Hajiji, the state government and other coalition federal government partners.

“I sympathise especially with the overcrowding in schools, the lack of business opportunities for the people, and unemployment among young people.

“We are fighting from the ground up, not from an ivory tower, reaching out to every corner to solve these issues. Every time I check social media, I see news of young people climbing trees to get internet connectivity.

“Our children use a small, rickety bridge to get to school, which deeply concerns me. We must address these issues to the best of our abilities. We are united in this country, sharing our hardships and successes together,” Anwar added.

Committed to fulfilling promises

There are also projects not included in this year’s overall allocation, Anwar said, such as the RM1 billion for upgrading border facilities, particularly involving the police, the armed forces, the Immigration Department, and the Customs Department.

“Interim allocations have been given to the state, including under Article 112D of the Federal Constitution, and we have increased them this year. I am committed to fulfilling the promises of the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), and this year we are implementing more than in the past 10 years combined,” he added.

The prime minister has no issues with Sabah and Sarawak requesting additional allocations but he said these requests must be negotiated as close and friendly partners.

“Article 112D is still under negotiation regarding the increase, as the previous MA63 agreement stated that it depended on the financial situation.

“We inherited significant debt, not from my time. However, because we inherited it, we must pay for it. If we don’t pay, people will lose confidence and won’t invest in our country,” he added.

Anwar said RM10.2 billion in revenue from Sabah was handed over to the federal government last year, with RM7.2 billion of that amount being taxes collected by the Inland Revenue Board.

Other revenues included cash payments amounting to RM1.7 billion, customs and excise duties (RM700 million) and state taxes (RM600 million).

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