

**Budget: Paltry sum for Sabah and Sarawak**  
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Despite the vast contributions Sabah and Sarawak make to the national economy, the federal government's "petty" allocation of only RM9.55 billion for development projects in the two states is unjustified, opposition parliamentarian Tony Pua says.

The two East Malaysian states are the "biggest losers" the 2011 Budget unveiled last week, the DAP's Petaling Jaya Utara MP said.

The value of all the projects planned for the peninsula amounted to RM109.74 billion, among these RM40 billion for mass rapid transit (MRT), RM26 billion for the Kuala Lumpur International Financial District (KLIFD) and RM5 billion for a 100-storey Warisan Merdeka Tower.

"Is this continued marginalisation justifiable in the country's pursuit to become a high-income nation when it is Sabah and Sarawak that have contributed the most to the federal government's coffers?" Pua (*left*) asked.

This was ironic, since Sabah and Sarawak were, at the same time, most in need of funding to raise the standards of living of their people, he told reporters at the Parliament lobby today, adding that people there believed they were being betrayed, despite their huge contributions to the nation.

Referring to the government's finances, which are heavily dependent on income from the oil and gas sector, Pua said that Sabah and Sarawak contributed 44.5 percent of the nation's crude oil and 64.1 percent of the natural gas outputs, based on 2007 data.

"The Ninth Malaysia Plan mid-term review shows that Sabah and Sarawak remain the poorest in the country. According to the 2007 data, the incidence of poverty in Peninsular Malaysia is 2.3 percent, Sarawak 4.3 percent and in Sabah, its nearly seven times higher at 16 percent," he said.

Citing 2009 data from the Rural and Regional Development Ministry, he said 41 percent of the people in both the states were without "rural water coverage", whereas in West Malaysia, the figure stood at just 10 percent.

No electricity for 33 percent of rural Sarawakians

The gap was even bigger for rural electricity supply, with 23 percent of the people in Sabah not covered, while the figure in Sarawak was 33 percent, compared with a mere 0.5 percent in Peninsular Malaysia.

"It is difficult to imagine that it was only in 1970 when Sabah was the second richest state in Malaysia, after Selangor (including Kuala Lumpur) but today, it is by far the poorest," Pua added.

Kuching DAP MP Chong Chieng Jien, who was also present, said if Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was serious about elevating the difficulties of the people of East Malaysia, he should give the Sarawak the Bakun hydroelectric power plant at "zero cost", with the condition that the dam should be overseen by a committee comprising both the BN and Pakatan members.

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