

PKR laments on Sarawak's poor status and growing wealth gap
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KUCHING - State PKR Chief Baru Bian lamented on Thursday why has Sarawak remained as the fourth poorest state despite having ample natural resources, when according to the Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud it had become prosperous.

Baru Bian was responding to remarks made by Taib who said he never took Sarawak's development for granted and it had achieved progress and become prosperous.

The Chief Minister has also urged the people to put public interest above personal interest, the Borneo Post reported on Wednesday.

"He (Taib) urged the people to be wary of those who tried to brainwash and incite them to hate the government. This, he warned, would cause people to forget about the bread and butter issues like planning further development of the state and country. He said when people forgot about the bread and butter issues they would dwell on personal matters or think about things that were not related to their well-being," the newspaper reported.

However, Baru Bian asked why Sarawak has become the fourth poorest state despite being richest in natural resources and why a huge wealth disparity still remains between the rich and poor.

"Yet the people have read about internet allegations and reports that the CM and his family own overseas properties worth billions of ringgit," he said.

"Let us be clear that it is the duty and responsibility of the government of the day (Barisan Nasional) to utilise and manage the coffers of the state for the benefit of the people. Development is not a choice. It is an imperative and a right to be enjoyed by the rakyat. Even the worse totalitarian regimes in the world have to develop their countries, what more to say Malaysia and in particular Sarawak which purportedly practises parliamentary democracy."

"However, what is the track record and success rate of the BN government in executing this responsibility of developing the state? It has failed miserably in the last 30 years in discharging this duty," he said in the statement.

Baru Bian questioned what bread and butter issues Taib was referring to and said the BN government has nothing to be proud of in terms of development in Sarawak after 47 years under their ruling.

While he agreed with Taib that rhetoric should be put aside, Baru Bian has urged Sarawakians to ask themselves some pertinent questions including the ownership of timber concessions and licenses, as well as palm oil plantations in the state.

"Who have benefitted from the many huge government contracts that have been awarded arbitrarily without open tender?"

Baru Bian claimed that PKR and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will ensure that the bread and butter

will reach common public, not only the selected few.

"On the other hand, PKR and Pakatan Rakyat will offer good governance, better management of the state's wealth, transparency, fair and equitable distribution of wealth, and implement an open tender system for all government projects and contracts. We want the bread and butter to reach the tables of the people, and not end up on the gravy train."

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