

'Sabah, Sarawak our equal partners'

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PM: Special council to look into upholding partnership rights of MA63

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PETALING JAYA: The formation of the Special Council on Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) on Sept 9 reflects the Federal Government's commitment to honour the rights of Sabah and Sarawak as equal partners, said Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"The Perikatan Nasional government is committed to ensuring the rights of Sabah and Sarawak as enshrined in the MA63.

"When the Perikatan Cabinet was formed, I created a special portfolio of Sabah and Sarawak affairs in the Prime Minister's department under minister Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Maximus Ongkili," he said in a speech at the Sibü indoor stadium in Sarawak in conjunction with Malaysia Day.

On Sept 9, the Cabinet agreed to form the special council, for which Muhyiddin is chairman.

"Members in the council will include the Chief Ministers of Sabah and Sarawak, Federal Ministers and other experts in the matter.

"Among the issues to be discussed in this council include associate partnerships as well as the rights of both states under Article 112 of Federal Constitution, MA63 and an inter-governmental committee report.

"Other issues to be deliberated on include state security and education," said Muhyiddin in his speech.

"Difficult issues can be solved in a

good way when the Federal and state governments are on the same path and of one heart.

"I would like to extend my gratitude to Sarawak Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg who held discussions with Petronas on the issues of oil and gas as well as sales tax on petroleum products in Sarawak," said Muhyiddin.

He further said the rakyat is the ultimate winner when there is a strong relationship between the federal and state governments.

"God willing, we will hold discussions with the Sabah state government after the Sabah state elections," said Muhyiddin.

Sabahans go to the polls on Sept 26.

The Prime Minister also stressed that the sovereignty of both states will be defended.

"I stress that Sabah and Sarawak will continue to be in Malaysia.

"The Federal Government will not bow to any pressure from anyone who questions the sovereignty of our country," said Muhyiddin, stating that the National Security Council and enforcement agencies will beef up border security.

"This includes the Ops Benteng and increasing enforcement in the areas of the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom)," said Muhyiddin.

In his speech, he also listed the various initiatives for Sabah and Sarawak under the National Digital Plan (Jendela) in the 12th Malaysia Plan.

"This initiative is to ensure no citizen is left behind. At the moment, most areas in Sabah and Sarawak do not have high-speed Internet access.

"Under Jendela, there will be many more digital infrastructure upgrading in Sabah and Sarawak," he added.

The first phase under Jendela will be to widen the 4G mobile broadband network from 91.6% to 96.9% in populated areas; to allow 7.5 million premises access to fixed broadband access with gigabit speed.

Muhyiddin said the next phase will be upgrading to 5G, construction of more communication towers and upgrading of the current communication transmitting devices.

The government, he added, was also doing all it can in offering incentives to boost the economy ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He also said new norms should not be a hindrance to better the economy.

Stressing on the importance of Malaysia Day, Muhyiddin said it is important for all Malaysians to unite as one.

"Today is also important for Sarawak. This land of the Hornbills is the host for the second time in a row for Malaysia Day.

"The celebration in Sibü, where it is attended by people of various ethnicities, religion and backgrounds reflect the harmony and peace of our country," said Muhyiddin.



Standing united: Royal Malaysian Navy raising the Jalur Gemilang at the Sibü indoor stadium in conjunction with the Malaysia Day celebration. — Bernama