

Govt never sidelined M40 to help B40: PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the government has never neglected the M40 group, and allegations by certain parties that the government's approach was more focused on the B40 group to the extent of neglecting the middle-income group are untrue.

"We have taken several approaches, but to say that we gave more to the B40 is not true. For example, just look at all science schools or MRSM (Mara Junior Science College), including the Malay College and other institutions. The poorest group that benefitted from it is very small, not even 1% or 2%.

"That's why I proposed to the education minister to have a new type of school specifically for children of the poorest group, or allocate 1% to 5% of the quota (in the existing schools) to the poorest group. Or else, the disparity will continue to exist," he said at the iTekad Networking event at Sasana Kijang yesterday.

On meritocracy in education, Anwar said: "If we want to talk about meritocracy between the best schools in Kuala Lumpur and schools in Kapit, Sarawak, it's like talking about a formula that does not emphasise on fairness.

"On one hand, there are proponents of meritocracy and on the other, there are proponents of the quota system (for bumiputera). I think the two should be combined," he said.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, urged relevant ministries, banks and the elite to reach out to the lower-level groups who have different perspectives and concerns on this matter, Bernama reported.

"Sometimes, I'm worried. We have been independent for so long and we are mature now, but our discourse is divided into two and disconnected between the elite and the lower-level groups. When they (lower-level groups) feel neglected and marginalised, they will turn to narrow issues of race and religion because the elite do not empathise with them," he added.