

Anwar: Unity govt gave the highest allocation for Sabah

KOTA KINABALU: The unity government has worked faster than previous administrations to restore the rights of Sabah and Sarawak under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the MA63 was an agreement between Malaya and Sabah and Sarawak that had been inherited from the nation's forefathers that needs to be fulfilled.

"But this has been delayed with many excuses, hence, the reason I instructed Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof to chair the necessary meetings and expedite what is required.

"What we have done in a year, it has been much more faster

than the decades before," he said, during the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ulu Padas hydroelectric dam project in Tenom district yesterday.

Among the promises that have been fulfilled, Anwar said, are handing over full regulatory control of the electricity supply in the region to the Sabah government.

Sarawak and Sabah have also been authorised to approve development projects below RM50mil.

He said, however, there have been instances where political figures in Sabah twisted the facts on these matters in order to play up sentiments among the people.

"If it is factual then I have no problem. I was also a staunch critic of the government before

but if they twist the facts, then I have to defend what we are doing," he said.

Towards this end, he said the good relations between him and Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor have made it easier to address problems in Sabah.

"This good relation between the state and federal governments helps expedite (the implementation) of projects for the comfort of Sabahans," he said.

The Prime Minister also countered claims from certain quarters that Putrajaya was not sensitive to the development needs of Sabah, saying that RM6.6bil in development funds was allocated to the state under Budget 2024 - the highest in history.

"This is because listen to the views from our friends that Sabah needs water and electricity supply, roads, schools and other basic facilities more than other states, that is why we gave the attention."

Anwar added that the state was also allocated some RM7.8bil funds for operating expenditure.

"So, it's a total of RM16bil a year for Sabah, this is among the biggest allocation for any state. But there have been PAS MPs who criticised me, asking why I am giving so much to Sabah.

"(My answer is) because Sabah is lagging behind. The state has been independent since 1963, yet the energy and water supply issues are more serious compared to the peninsula," he said.

Anwar said the Federal Government would consider adding another terminal at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport due to the high influx of returning tourists after the pandemic.

He said he had received glowing reviews from people, including the South Korean president whose family had visited Sabah.

"The president said his family told him that (Sabah) was among the most beautiful places in the region, and was also, most importantly, impressed with the friendliness of Sabahans.

"So, if there is a need for another terminal, I have told the Chief Minister, we will look into adding another terminal in Kota Kinabalu," Anwar said.