

'Economy still recovering'

PM: Annual grants to be increased when situation improves

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PORT DICKSON: Annual development allocations for backbencher MPs have been slashed as the country's economy is still in recovery mode, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the allocations would be increased once the economy improved.

"Yes, the allocation given to MPs for development purposes has been reduced as we are still facing economic problems.

"But we will also coordinate this (allocations for development) with district officers and the state economic development officers (to ensure important projects are carried out)," he said after having lunch at Kedai Makanan and Minuman Salleh bin Abdullah.

The Star on Thursday, quoting sources, reported that constituency allocations for government MPs this year had been slashed by more than 65%, from RM3.8mil to RM1.3mil.

The RM1.3mil consists of a RM1mil outright grant and another RM300,000 for service centre operations.

Many backbencher MPs were informed by the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department in early January of the RM300,000 allocation for service centres.

The ICU also informed government MPs that outright grants would be slashed to RMLmil from the previous RM1.5mil.

Under former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, MPs in Peninsular Malaysia received RM3.5mil in outright grants and RM300,000 for service centre operations, while those in Sabah and Sarawak received RM4mil in outright grants and RM300,000 to maintain service centre operations.

Anwar said MPs who needed higher allocations for emergency



Nice meeting you: Anwar shaking hands with the mosque congregants after performing Friday prayers at Masjid Kariah Bagan Pinang in Port Dickson. - Bernama

work such as repairing roads and surau or deepening rivers could always apply for more.

"They can apply for more if there is a pressing need. We will consider it," he said.

He said the move to reduce the allocation was to send a message to the rakyat that the government was serious when it said it had to better control its finances.

Anwar added that he had started the ball rolling when he decided not to accept a salary as Prime Minister.

Cabinet ministers have also agreed to a 20% pay cut until Malaysia reaches economic recovery.

Anwar said he had to be strict on the issues of governance, corrup-

tion and power abuse if the country were to move forward.

"That is why even political parties have to be questioned if you suddenly have more than RM300mil in your account.

"Whatever the reason you give, you need to explain it to the rakyat," he said, without naming any political party.

He said the party had to explain how it could raise so much money when the country was facing the Covid-19 pandemic and people were losing their jobs.

"You can raise hundreds of millions of ringgit, but when you are asked how you managed to do that, you say you are being pressured.

"Just answer the question if it is

true that you have that amount of money in your account, and if it is, where did it come from?" he said.

Anwar added that questions would surely be asked as the Covid-19 pandemic had caused much hardship, with many people losing their jobs and projects having to be halted.

Although he did not mention Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, the party is currently being investigated under the Money Laundering Act and the MACC Act 2009.