

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

RM1B TO UPGRADE SARAWAK, SABAH BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Allocation will go towards improving security, increasing capability of CIQS Complexes, says PM

KUCHING

THE Finance Ministry has given preliminary approval for an additional allocation of RM1 billion to upgrade infrastructure and increase the capability of the Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Security (CIQS) Complex at Sarawak's and Sabah's borders.

Yesterday, Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the approval was given following a discussion with Indonesian President Joko Widodo recently on the relocation of Indonesia's capital to Nusantara, Kalimantan, which shares a border with the two states.

"We have decided to give an additional allocation to improve security and increase the capability (of the complexes), as well as for other basic infrastructure, such as roads."

He said this at a press conference after chairing the Malaysia Agreement 1963 Implementation Action Council meeting here.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking at a press conference in Kuching yesterday. With him are (from left) Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor, Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Abang Openg, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Sabah, Sarawak Affairs and Special Functions) Datuk Armizan Mohd Ali. PIC BY NADIM BOKHARI

Fadillah Yusof, Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Abang Openg, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor and several federal and state cabinet ministers.

Anwar said the federal government agreed to increase the special grant to Sarawak, as provided for in Article 112D of the Federal Constitution, to RM300 million.

He said the amount was only for the initial stage before a specific formula is announced by the federal and Sarawak governments.

He said past leaders decided on the provision of the grant during the formation of Malaysia as Sabah and Sarawak lagged behind

the peninsula in development.

"Prior to this, Sarawak was only given RM16 million. As finance minister, I think that is an unreasonable amount.

"But we cannot afford to give too much as it is also stated in Article 112D that the grant is subject to the financial position of the federal government."

Anwar also announced the appointment of Sarawak Financial Secretary Datuk Seri Dr Wan Lizozman Wan Omar as a member of the Inland Revenue Board's (IRB) board of directors, effective yesterday.

"The request (from the Sarawak

government) was made a long time ago and I think there is no problem.

"What's important is the condition (for the appointment). The person has to be a professional and experienced, traits which he (Wan Lizozman) possesses. This can help the IRB."

He also announced that bonuses for civil servants in all states would be exempt from tax.

"Currently, all bonuses paid out to state governments are taxable. At Abang Johari's request, which I think is reasonable, all bonuses will now be tax-exempt. This applies to all civil servants." **Bernama**