

Putrajaya shows sincerity

Sabah, Sarawak given autonomy over RM50mil projects

PUTRAJAYA: In a move to show that the government is serious in committing to the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), all government projects in Sabah and Sarawak below RM50mil will now be managed directly by the state governments themselves, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

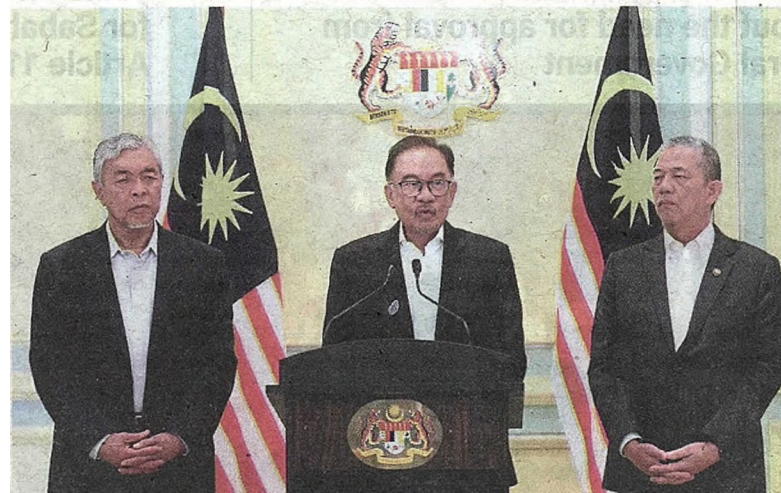
They need not go through the Federal Government. The decision takes effect immediately and was decided by the Cabinet as many of the projects in Sabah and Sarawak were delayed due to the decisions having had to be made by the Federal Government.

The Prime Minister revealed this at a media conference after chairing the Cabinet meeting here yesterday.

"Last year, I had stated that I wanted to expedite the matters which had been delayed in accordance with the MA63. I entrusted 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 to work on this to revive the spirit of the agreement which has not been fulfilled a long time.

"We have decided to expedite the decisions on the projects in Sabah and Sarawak which have been delayed.

"But due to the fact that the decisions have to be made in Putrajaya, the Finance Ministry has agreed that any project under RM50mil



Major announcement: Anwar holding a press conference after the Cabinet meeting in Putrajaya. With him are Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Fadillah. - AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

will now be completely handed over to Sabah and Sarawak to decide on the implementation with immediate effect.

"On regulatory powers on the matters of oil and gas, the matter has been decided on Sarawak and as for Sabah, it has been approved - as I had stated in my earlier announcements.

"Early next month, the Sabah state assembly will finalise this after it is endorsed by the King," he said.

On Dec 21 last year, Anwar stated that the Cabinet agreed to transfer the regulatory power over Sabah's gas supply from Putrajaya through

PETRONAS to the state government.

Anwar further stated that he would be chairing the special committee on MA63 before the end of January, likely in Kuching.

"The meeting will be attended by Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor," added Anwar.

He said that during the meeting, they would finalise the special allocations for Sabah and Sarawak under Article 112(D) of the MA63, which states that the Federal Government must provide a suitable special allocation to the two states.

"It was RM16mil earlier and then RM25mil. This allocation was supposed to have been reviewed every five years but that did not happen. Therefore, we have to ensure there is a logical increase in the allocation in accordance with MA63.

"We must revive this allocation again and we will finalise this as soon as possible," said Anwar.

He also said as Sarawak seemed to have reaped development in the Pan Borneo Highway project but Sabah is lagging behind in the same project, the Cabinet had decided on further allocations for Sabah.

"With regards to Pan Borneo - there has been much development on this in Sarawak but there has been much delay in parts of Sabah. We have agreed to add the allocation to Sabah and the Works Minister will give further details on this.

"To ensure the implementation of MA63 is more effective, the working committee will continue under the chairmanship of Fadillah," said Anwar.

The Prime Minister said that yesterday's Cabinet meeting discussed at length on the need for political will of the government to commit to the MA63.

The MA63 is a legal document that detailed the terms for the formation of the Federation of Malaysia.

It was signed in London on July 9, 1963 between Great Britain, the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak.