

RM1bil boost for border security

Sabah and Sarawak infrastructure to get upgrades

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KUCHING: The Federal Government will allocate additional funding of RM1bil to improve border security in Sabah and Sarawak in tandem with Indonesia's relocation of its capital to Nusantara, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the Finance Ministry had given preliminary approval for the allocation, which will be used to upgrade customs, immigration and quarantine facilities and other infrastructure along Malaysia's border with Indonesia.

"In my recent discussion with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, we spoke about Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara (in Kalimantan), which is close to Sabah and Sarawak.

"As such, we have decided to provide additional allocation to enhance border security as well as basic infrastructure such as roads, so that we don't look too backward," he told a press conference after chairing the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) Implementation Action Council (MTPMA63) meeting here yesterday.

The meeting was attended by Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg, Sabah Chief

Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor, and other federal and state leaders.

The RM1bil allocation is expected to be included in the 2023 Budget which will be tabled next month. Work is expected to start immediately on the proposed upgrades to the CIQ facilities and roads connecting Sabah and Sarawak to Nusantara.

Anwar also said the Federal Government had agreed to increase the special grants to Sabah and Sarawak under Article 112D of the Federal Constitution based on a suitable formula.

For a start, he said Sarawak would receive RM300mil, up from RM16mil previously, while Sabah's amount would be increased from RM26mil to RM260mil, pending the finalisation of the formula.

"We have to look at the special grants in a reasonable and fair manner. Over the years, Sarawak was only given RM16mil, which I don't think is reasonable.

"At the same time, we cannot afford to give too large a sum, as Article 112D states that the grant is subject to the Federal Government's financial position," he said.

In addition, Anwar announced the appointment of Sarawak Financial Secretary Datuk Seri Dr Wan Lizozman Wan Omar to the Inland Revenue Board's (IRB) board



Ties that bind: Anwar and Abang Johari trying their hand at making a delicacy in Kuching. - Bernama

of directors effective yesterday.

He said this was in line with Sarawak's request for a representative on the IRB, which had been made some time ago.

"I have no problems with that. The criteria is that the person must be a professional with experience, and I believe the state financial secretary meets the qualifications," he said.

Sarawak ministers who attended the meeting welcomed the RM1bil

allocation for border security.

"It's timely for the Federal Government to step up its responsibility. Security is their responsibility, according to MA63," Deputy Premier Datuk Seri Dr Sim Kui Hian said.

"Sarawak has the longest land and sea borders, and we could see how important security was during the Covid-19 and rabies outbreaks".

Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah said

the allocation would help Sarawak secure its borders.

"This is one area of utmost importance that has not received much focus in the past.

"As Sarawak is progressing fast now, with the Pan-Borneo and coastal highways nearing completion, as well as the fast pace of development in Kalimantan; there is a need to beef up our border posts, CIQ facilities, and personnel manning the border," he said.