

PM: Water woes must be resolved in a transparent manner

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PUTRAJAYA: The federal authorities will not stop at anything to iron out Kelantan and Sabah's water woes but these issues must be resolved and managed in a transparent manner, says the Prime Minister.

Announcing that Sabah and Kelantan had agreed to work with the Federal Government on the matter, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the management board of the water authorities must also be efficient.

"The states and the authorities concerned must be able to work together and with the Federal Government," he said after hand-

ing over keys to house buyers of the civil servants' housing programme at Precinct 18 here yesterday.

Earlier, he had held a meeting with Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor and Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yakob to discuss the issue of water supply affecting the two states.

A special task force, he said, had been put in charge to look into the states' proposals and needs for the Federal Government to consider and approve.

"There are a few pressing issues such as the lack of clean water supply, and we will provide some funds for that to be resolved fast.

"What is important is that we remain committed to our responsibility for the people to enjoy

clean water as soon as possible," he said.

Kelantan, said Anwar, had presented "some figures" to resolve its water woes.

"I have not made any decision on this and have asked the task force to look into Kelantan's request and conditions that need to be in place such as management and transparency in project implementation," he said, adding that Sabah had raised its need for a soft loan to proceed with the construction of a dam.

"We will look at it as a fast-track project. The progress in the works (involving water supply) in Sabah is more acceptable.

"The problem in Kelantan, on the other hand, is more serious because the financial require-

ments are huge," he said.

He said Kelantan's initial request for its water supply project was RM8bil but the Federal Government believed that this could be brought down substantially.

During a recent trip to Kelantan, the Prime Minister had said that the water supply problem in the state needed to be resolved regardless of political affiliation and that the government had agreed to take immediate measures towards the purpose.

Anwar also said that he had presented this decision to the Sultan of Kelantan Sultan Muhammad V.

When visiting Sabah on Wednesday, he said the government was determined to resolve

the state's infrastructure problems, including those concerning water supply.

In Kota Kinabalu, Hajiji said the Federal Government was set to provide over RM320mil to expedite and resolve Sabah's chronic water woes.

He said he was confident that the aid would help the state implement short-term plans to solve the water woes.

The projects involve the implementation of six programmes encompassing 20 projects, including nine under district plans for Kota Kinabalu, Tuaran, Putatan, Papar, Beaufort, Keningau, Tawau, Lahad Datu and Sandakan.

Hajiji said the projects were expected to take six to 12 months to complete.