

100 days: Unity government catching people's attention

IN the past 100 days, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's unity government has won the people's attention with several initiatives focused on the less fortunate, especially the poor, the needy and those in the B40 (low income) group, according to a report by Bernama.

The national news agency's interviews of people in the randomly selected areas of Chero Tok Kun in Seberang Prai, Penang, and Permatang Pauh, Penang Island, find that most agree that Anwar's efforts in the three months of his governance is something to be proud of.

"We see that since Anwar became Prime Minister, he took immediate action to help the people, and then through the recent tabling of Budget 2023 various initiatives, including the Menu Rahmah Cash Aid (STR), were given to help the people," says food stall operator Mohd Fahmi Mohd Noor, 45.

"I feel that the STR this time is more aimed at the right groups, taking into consideration the number of children in each household while the Menu Rahmah is also one of the good initiatives for people who cannot afford to buy food."

He adds that petty traders have not been left out in getting aid, as announced in Budget 2023, and he believes it can help boost the business of hawkers and petty traders.

Mohd Fahmi says he also believes that Anwar, who is the member of Parliament for Tambun, Perak will implement more initiatives in the future to help people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

For Norhasfiah Mustafa, 40, among the various efforts, initiatives and programmes introduced by Anwar, she is most attracted to the concept of Malaysia Madani which is one of the efforts to cultivate the spirit of unity among Malaysians.

She says it is known that Anwar has always cared about the spirit of unity among the people and when he became Prime Minister he continued this by introducing the concept of a Madani nation to the people.

"I am happy with the Madani concept as I believe it can foster a spirit of togetherness, unity and well-being among Malaysians. This to some extent can help improve the country," says the engineer, who works at a factory in Perai.

Public university student from Ipoh, Nuriah Jamal, 19, notes that there have been several changes in the 100 days of Anwar's administration that can be seen during the recent tabling of Budget 2023, including the Menu Rahmah e-wallet credit of RM200 for youth aged 18 to 20 years old.

"This initiative is an annual government initiative. So to some extent, it can help ease the burden of youth like us to cope with the rising cost of living," she says.

Environmental activist Hafizudin Nasarudin, 35, praises Anwar for focusing on environmental issues when he provided an additional



The Prime Minister arriving at the Parliament for the recent tabling of Budget 2023, which has various initiatives to help the needy. - Photos: FAIHAN GHANI/The Star/Media in Arms



Chong Hui San



Ching Yueng Kent



Jarrett Ong

allocation of RM150mil a year for the Ecological Fiscal Transfer for Biodiversity Conservation to state governments compared with RM70mil last year.

"Apart from this, the introduction of Menu Rahmah can also to some extent reduce the burden of the people, especially the B40 [lower income] group.

"Throughout these 100 days, there have been various good results that need to be praised and I hope that this momentum will be sustained and improved," says Hafizudin, who voted in the Tambun parliamentary constituency in Perak that Anwar won.

While many welcome the economic recovery initiatives - especially the Menu Rahmah which is not only benefiting consumers but also gives extraordinary profits to traders - there are others who feel it is too early to gauge Anwar's governance and more needs to be done.

"It is too early to say how the unity government has performed in 100 days. I think it is presumptuous

to base anything within 100 days," says educator Mimie Herrie, 42, from Seremban.

"In terms of issues, the most important one is controlling the price of items because it is getting expensive to run a household these days," Mimie tells *The Star*.

She adds that she hopes the unity government will show the utmost integrity in its administration.

"Above all, the rakyat has given them the mandate to rule after a tumultuous period, so it is my hope, and the hope of many people I'm sure, that they lead by example.

"This means it is time there is utmost integrity among ministers because if they want our trust, they have to prove to us they are up for the challenge.

"Cut down on allowances given to them, and they should limit overspending as well as having unnecessary events or functions across all sectors in the government. It should not be at the expense of the rakyat," she says.

Homemaker Anna Ariffin, 49, agrees that more time is needed for

the unity government's initiatives to bear fruit.

"I haven't seen any difference in these first 100 days of the unity government's administration. I think what the unity government is trying to do is not showing any impacts yet," the resident of Sungai Petani, Kedah, tells *The Star*.

She believes more needs to be done for the people.

"The recent Budget 2023 has some initiatives but I hope the unity government can put more focus on cost of living issues, especially in Kedah," she says.

Entrepreneur Siti Yamani also feels that more needs to be done, especially in addressing the high price of goods.

"Maybe it's too early but I don't see any changes yet since the unity government took office," says the 30-something from Sepang, Selangor.

Similarly, Calvin Joseph, 29, from Kuala Lumpur, feels that more needs to be done by the unity government.

"My friends and I appreciate the

Menu Rahmah but we need more long-term measures to help us with the high cost of living and low wages," says the young executive.

Despite the Prime Minister's promise to be fair to all ethnic groups, it is still too early to tell if this will materialise, says music teacher Chong Hui San, 35.

"As Anwar and his Cabinet reaches 100 days in office, I hope that politics is stable and the economy is on the way to recovery.

"Next would be eliminating racial discrimination, wiping out corruption to move towards Malaysia Madani.

"The PM should be paying attention to people, listening to their views and visiting the ground more often," Chong tells *Sin Chew Daily*, noting that in education, while implementing a fair policy, all streams of schools should be treated the same.

The music teacher adds, "I also hope more music festivals can be held and promote music of all ethnic groups. Promote music and emphasise how important music is to people."

Lawyer Jarrett Ong, 29, feels that while it's dear that the unity government cares about issues related to people's livelihood, up till now he has yet to see any improvements in the livelihood issue.

However, he says, "I believe people's income per capita, employment opportunities and business opportunities will be making progress. The actions taken by the government now are better than distributing small sums for cash aid prior to this."

Ong says he hopes that we will see a stable government under the rule of law: "Politicians like Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the late Karpal Singh and Anwar have always been referring to rule of law.

"In a society governed by the rule of law, enforcement is important but the key lies in respect that the people have for the entire system."

Doctor Chong Yueng Kent, 28, says a move by the government to offer contract doctors permanent positions in the public healthcare sector is a good policy.

"Apart from enjoying the benefits, the policy will help to reduce brain drain and more doctors can be trained to be specialists in future. The standard of medical service will be upgraded.

"If Malaysia becomes a destination for medical tourism, it is a worthwhile investment for country and people too," he tells *Sin Chew Daily*.

He nonetheless points out that it is a worrying trend that doctors are required to work for long hours in public service due to constraints in human resources.

"I hope Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim can have a roundtable discussion with doctors to arrange for a realignment of human resources. It's a win-win for both patients and doctors to draft a policy not to let the doctors overwork," he says. - Bernama/Media in Arms