

'Unity govt has never neglected Indian community'

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➤ Eradication of hardcore poverty in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Penang done regardless of race, says prime minister

SHAH ALAM: The unity government has never neglected the welfare of the Indian community but has initiated various programmes to assist in the community's development, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said every programme that has been carried out or is being carried out by the government is universal in nature and tailored in the interest of the entire Indian community in the country as per its needs and aspirations.

Citing the success of having eradicated hardcore poverty in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Penang, Anwar

said efforts to eradicate poverty was done regardless of race.

"I don't care whether they are *tauke* who are Malays, Chinese or Indians. What I care about is the underprivileged majority.

"That's why I say our first priority is to eradicate hardcore poverty. Though in terms of numbers, Malays are the majority, in terms of those who benefited under the initiative in Kuala Lumpur and Negeri Sembilan were members of the Indian community.

"I don't see the issue of poverty from a racial point of view. If they fall under the hardcore poor category, they will be assisted," he said at the Fifth International Convention and Celebration of Indian statesman Dr Ambedkar's 133rd birthday and Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration at the Ideal Convention Centre here on Sunday.

Anwar said the government has set up four new Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT) schools in Selangor and Perak, plus two more in Negeri Sembilan, which started operations last month.

"Therefore, claims that we did not do anything for the Indian community is not true. There was also an additional RM30 million allocated for the development of SJK (T) and

RM5 million for the development of education and Tamil literature, which I had announced at Universiti Malaya recently."

Anwar added that the government has expanded Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia facilities to Indians; though the microcredit organisation was initially intended for Malays, through an announcement of RM50 million to empower Indian women entrepreneurs via the Prosperity Empowerment and A New Normal for Indian Women programme.

He said the Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit, which has been placed under the Prime Minister's Department, is not the only avenue for Indian communities to uplift themselves, Bernama reported.

"Let me remind you, is this adequate? No. Is this the final act? No. But this is the process, do understand and appreciate the problem that we have to face in dealing with some extreme voices among the Malays that form the majority. We have to deal with all these issues at the same time.

"Everywhere I go when I visit the Malay communities I tell them we are here to set (other communities) a good example. I want to prove a point that if we want to lead this country we need to be just to all of our citizens."



Anwar, accompanied by Deputy Unity Minister Senator Saraswathy Kandasami (left) at the event in Shah Alam yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC