

PM queries RM3 million allocation in 2023 to resolve UMS water woes

PUTRAJAYA: PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday ordered the relevant agencies to immediately address water woes in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

He also asked what had happened to the RM3 million he had allocated to resolve the issue last year.

This came a day after Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir was greeted with a protest staged by students during his visit.

Anwar said he had listened to the students' grouses and had received confirmation on the issue from its vice-chancellor.

"I read on social media that the higher education minister was met by UMS students who had not showered.

"I'm not sure. Maybe the implementation (of the project to address the water issue) takes some time," he said at the Finance Ministry's monthly assembly.

He said he would not be quick to judge as the project could take some time.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, has asked Treasury secretary-general Datuk Johan Mahmood Merican to get updates from the ministry and university on the allocation and actions taken.

While it seemed trivial for some people, he said, "the undergraduates facing water supply issues should concern us".

Anwar said there seemed to be a disconnect between planners, managers and those carrying out project implementation.

"It is our responsibility to ensure that the development is meaningful to them (people)."

On Monday, Zambry was greeted by irate students during his first working visit to the university.

They were seen holding placards to tell him of their plight of having to study while enduring water supply problems.

Zambry also announced an additional RM2 million for a short-

term solution through the management of the water pressure and a tube well system.

In Kota Kinabalu, UMS student representative council 2022/2023 president Jeeva Cassandra Abdul Mumin said the university had "optimised" the RM3 million allocation from Anwar to solve its water woes.

She said they had participated in a meeting chaired by UMS Deputy Vice-Chancellor (student affairs and alumni) Associate Professor Dr Raman Noordin to get an update on the matter.

She said up to Nov 15, UMS administrative and procurement processes had been completed.

"To date, RM18 million has been spent on activities such as drilling exploration and the construction of the water treatment system since 2021.

"The project is now moving to the physical work phase involving tasks such as the construction of the pipeline and water treatment system. The project site handover involving two contractors has been conducted simultaneously.

"Each contractor will be given a period of four months with an allocation of RM1.5 million to ensure the success of the project at their respective sites," she said in a joint statement with honorary treasurer Mohammad Idris Mohd Hairie.

Jeeva added that a letter about the water supply issue from the Sabah Water Department had also been forwarded to the chief minister to seek clarification and solutions related to the water supply disruption.

The council added that actions taken by the university included the installation of water pumps and tanks around the campus, as well as building gravity water projects with pipes and tanks.

Other projects undertaken by the university are the construction of a new water balance tank with a capacity of five million litres at UMS and an underground water treatment system.