

PM: No room for divisive forces

Racial and religious extremism could rip apart nation's fabric, says Anwar

By **DURIE RAINER FONG**
and **STEPHANIE LEE**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has slammed certain quarters in the country for undermining efforts to unite the people by continuously playing up extreme racial and religious sentiments.

The Prime Minister said that in political battles in the peninsula, there are narrow-minded people who capitalise on such sentiments to gain political mileage.

He said such individuals have gone to the extent of denying the existence and right of representation of other races, with some playing religious sentiments to the extent of considering others as worthless.

"We cannot underestimate the forces in the peninsula, Sabah or Sarawak... They would view their survival purely from a particular race or religion and this would, of course, be damaging to the fabric of our country," he said, in his speech when closing the Kaamatan festival in Penampang near here yesterday.

Anwar said he has always been clear that his government, with the cooperation of the Sabah government, will continue to fight for, demand and ensure that the rights of every single citizen in Malaysia



Bountiful harvest:

Anwar holding up a padi stalk during the mongomot ceremony.

will be protected and preserved.

"I have to continue to reiterate this point because there are forces with some extreme views.

"Even after six decades of independence, you can still hear (such sentiments). This should not be tolerated," he said.

Anwar said his government has drawn criticism over its stance, with some saying that Malaysia, being a democratic country, should give the people space to express their views.

"But there must be a limit. I will

not compromise on the need to preserve the security of all Malaysians and on that we must stand together," Anwar said.

On another matter, Anwar said Sabah will get back its rights enshrined under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) once the state and federal governments are ready to discuss the matter.

He said that while it is an ongoing process, changes have to be made in phases.

Anwar urged political leaders to not constantly dispute what the

government is doing to ensure that these rights are returned.

"I have no problem at all fulfilling what is promised under the MA63 but one thing I ask is to not question the government.

"This is because I have to answer attacks in Parliament, as according to some MPs, the allocations given to Sabah and Sarawak are too high.

"It is high but I responded that this is needed because of poverty and (poor) road conditions."

Anwar added that the current

focus is to end poverty, provide better infrastructure and health-care to the people while handling claims from not only Sabah and Sarawak but other states for their rights.

"Even Kelantan and Terengganu are now asking for 20% so we have to see," he said, adding that the federal government would never leave Sabah and Sarawak out.

He said since the Madani government took over the reins over a year ago, it has achieved far more than what previous governments did in terms of fulfilling the MA63.

"Since becoming PM, I have raised the allocation in 2024 to RM16bil compared to RM12.9bil in 2022.

As for the 40% net revenue claim from Sabah, Anwar said the latest allocation of RM16bil given to the state is actually bigger in amount from the 40% constitutional right.

He said strong statements accusing the federal government of not doing enough had come from those in power before.

"But when they were in charge, they did not think of these matters. When they're no longer in power, they make so much noise asking for this and that.

"We have to stop such sentiments; they will trigger similar ones in other states. This will not help," added Anwar.