

Perak to supply water to Penang

Sultan Nazrin and Saraani have given their consent, says Anwar

By LO TERN CHERN
andylo@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: Perak has agreed to supply water to Penang via the Kerian Integrated Green Industrial Park into Seberang Perai, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah and the Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Saraani Mohamad, have agreed to provide water supply to Penang.

"We've received encouraging news as Sultan Nazrin and Saarani have consented to provide water from Sungai Perak, flowing through the green industry of Kerian, to Seberang Perai initially, including Nibong Tebal and Sungai Bakap.

"I believe with the better relationship with Kedah lately, a more professional approach can also be negotiated regarding Penang's water supply needs," he said during the closing ceremony of the Northern Zone Madani Rakyat programme at the Pesta site in Sungai Nibong here yesterday.

Held in conjunction with the Madani Aidilfitri celebrations, the Madani Rakyat programme offered the services of 196 ministries and government agencies at the 32 booths set up and saw over 200,000 people from Penang, Kedah and Perlis attending the event.

On Jan 3, Saarani had said that the Perak-Penang Water Project was not expected to proceed this year due to the need to await for allocations from the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry for the construction of a Water Treatment Plant in Kerian district of Perak.

However, during a visit to Penang on Feb 16, Anwar announced that the Federal Government would expedite the Perak-Penang Water Project after



Nice to meet you: Anwar sharing some time with invited guests during the closing of the Northern Zone Madani Rakyat programme in Sungai Nibong, Penang. - CHAN BOON KAI/The Star

announcing plans to develop Kerian Integrated Green Industrial Park, which would also bring investments and economic development to south Seberang Perai district bordering Perak.

Anwar, who also spoke on the proposed airport project in Kulim, Kedah, said the infrastructure involves the jurisdiction of the state and federal governments and must be carefully studied by taking into account all factors.

He said Transport Minister Anthony Loke had recently agreed to continue the negotiations but would follow the proper process.

"We are open to discussing and evaluating all aspects.

"It's crucial to follow due pro-

cess, considering both state and federal jurisdictions," he said, adding that the project was pending since the earlier announcement as it was poorly researched and did not fully follow the required procedures.

"We have never refused to discuss and examine all the factors.

"We asked for the process to be adhered to because there is absolute jurisdiction of the state and there is absolute jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

"We take into account any objections in terms of flight routes, security issues and objections from the air force, as well as the projected cargo and its sufficiency, which we will discuss," he said.

tem, then the workers need to be trained.

"I hope the federal and state governments will collaborate to prioritise this new training stage with the Education Ministry continuing efforts to foster interest among school students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects," he said.

Meanwhile, Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the state was focusing on high-impact sectors such as Integrated Circuit (IC) design, research and development (R&D) and global business services (GBS) to ensure economic sustainability for the future.

He said the state's commitment to spearhead emerging fields will not only bolster Penang's economy but also generate positive ripple effects for neighbouring states in the northern corridor.

"Efforts to strengthen the Halal Industry, Halal Tourism and Islamic Finance Technology (Fintech) within Penang will contribute to diversifying investment flows and overall income into Malaysia," he said.

Chow also commended Anwar for his efforts in driving investment into the country, worth about RM76.1bil as of March.

He noted that Anwar's recent official visits to Saudi Arabia and several other countries hold the potential in assisting Penang to achieve its objectives.

"I am hopeful that the Prime Minister will help the state in realising these aspirations by directing investment potentials to Penang, now hailed as the Silicon Valley of the East," he said.

On a separate matter, Anwar who is also Finance Minister urged all implementing agencies, particularly ministries, to prioritise the training of young people in artificial intelligence (AI) so that the country does not fall behind in this field.

He said training for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) fields should be given to all to ensure equal opportunities to those in the urban and rural areas.

"TVET needs to be enhanced to meet investor demands, such as the recent announcement by Microsoft which would be investing RM10.5bil and requires thousands of workers.

"If it involves the entire ecosys-