

'HARDCORE POVERTY AID NOT RACE-BASED'

Govt does not discriminate based on ethnicity, Anwar tells Dewan Rakyat

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THE government does not discriminate based on race in its efforts to eradicating hardcore poverty.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the efforts were not carried out according to ethnic background.

"While the majority of those in hardcore poverty are Malays, the poorest among them are from the Indian community.

"For instance, when we address hardcore poverty in Kuala Lumpur, we do not differentiate by ethnicity. All those in hardcore poverty include the Malays, a small number of Chinese, and a significant number from the Indian community.

"If it is claimed that assistance is only for Malays, it's important to note that while they make up a large portion, we are not only helping them. I hope this explanation is clear.

"Our commitment to eradicating hardcore poverty for everyone is clear. If there are any statements suggesting otherwise, please let me know, as they contradict our policy.

"Anyone in extreme poverty, as long as they are citizens, must be helped without discrimination," he said in response to a supplementary question from S. Kesavan (PH-Sungai Siput) during Prime Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

In response to an initial question from Datuk Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff (PN-Rantau Panjang), Anwar said up to Monday, hardcore poverty in 15,029 households had been resolved.

"Up to Jan 31, 2023, the number of households in the hardcore poverty category was 126,372. *Alhamdulillah*, on July 29 this year, the number, identified through the Implementation Coordination Unit and e-Kasih data, has been resolved.

"This success led to new registrations when we opened for



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. He says up to Monday, hardcore poverty in 15,029 households has been resolved. BERNAMA PIC

new applications on Aug 1, including for those who felt they needed to apply again. A total of 22,893 households have registered,

"Up to yesterday (Monday), hardcore poverty cases for 15,029 households, or 65.6 per cent, have been resolved. We will continue to address the remaining cases."

Siti Zailah had asked about the status of the government's efforts to eradicate hardcore poverty.

Anwar said he had asked the state governments to continue registering the hardcore poor in their states.

"It requires cooperation between the federal and state government machineries, involving chief ministers, menteri besar, district officers and state secretaries, to undertake new registrations and eradicate poverty as a whole.

"We (the government) are receiving good cooperation from all state governments in our efforts to eradicate hardcore poverty."

Anwar disagreed with Siti Zailah's statement that the government had failed to eradicate hardcore poverty within the targeted timeframe.

He said the number of households in the category stemmed from previous records under the Perikatan Nasional government.

"Don't call it a failure. The number comes from the government supported by Rantau Panjang (Siti Zailah). We are using that figure and we will resolve it."

On the mechanism used to categorise the hardcore poor, Anwar said it was measured by income in the past.

"However, we noticed weaknesses in this approach. For example, if the income is RM2,000 per month but there are four household members, the actual income per person is only RM500.

"That's why we have shifted from assessing total income to per capita income. I believe this approach is more accurate as it takes into account the number of children and dependents."

On another issue, Anwar said the proposed merger of Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd (BPMB), Exim Bank and SME Bank will not overlook the needs of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the Bumiputeras.

He said this was among the key conditions imposed by Bank Negara Malaysia on the merger.

"The requirement regarding MSMEs and Bumiputera loans remains a key criterion and part of the merger policy," he said in response to Datuk Dr Ku Abd Rahman Ku Ismail (PN-Kubang Pasu).

At a separate event, Deputy Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Minister Datuk Seri R. Ramanan said the 2025 Budget tabled on Friday was a budget for all Malaysians, with no community left out. He criticised certain parties for claiming that the Indian community felt marginalised after being allocated RM130 million under the Budget.

"For the Indian community, the prime minister has stated many times... not to divide (allocations by community)," he said.

"(Certain parties) say only RM130 million has been given to the Indian community. Does this mean the allocation provided for health is not for the Indian community? Indians won't get it? No, it is for all."

Page 1 pic: Andak Bah Katchong (left) and Wan Jiha Bah Tat showing the Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah they received at the Orang Asli settlement in Kuala Woh in Tapah, Perak, last year.