

Poverty eradication not based on race, says PM

> 'It is true that majority of poor are Malays, but significant portion of poorest are from Indian community with Chinese making up a smaller number'

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said although the majority of the poor in the country are from the Malay and Bumiputera communities, all races including the Chinese and Indians will be helped.

"It is true the majority are Malays, but a significant portion of the poorest are from the Indian community. For instance, in Kuala Lumpur, the majority is Malay but the Indian community is large.

"When addressing hardcore poverty, we do not do so based on race. Therefore, we will address the needs of all the poor, including the small number in the Chinese community and the larger number in the Indian community," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said the policy is designed to support all poor citizens and encouraged anyone who hears statements contradicting it to report them as they are not aligned with the government's stance.

Anwar was responding to a supplementary question from S. Kesavan (PH-Sungai Siput) on addressing hardcore poverty and the implementation of initiatives to eradicate poverty to cover all races, including the Indian community.

In response to an original question from Datuk Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff (PN-Rantau Panjang) on government efforts to eradicate hardcore poverty, Anwar said as of Jan 31 last year, a total of 126,372 household heads were under the hardcore poor category and the issue was resolved by July 29 this year.

"However, we are aware that the number has increased, as the success of this initiative has led to new registrations. By July 29, we had resolved the initial cases, and on Aug 1 we reopened for new requests, including older ones that felt the need to apply again. This amounts to 22,893.

"As of Oct 21, 15,029 household heads or 65.6% of the hardcore poor cases have been resolved, and we will continue to work on addressing the remaining cases."

On the mechanism used, Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the government has shifted from using household income to per

capita income as a more accurate way to assess the actual earnings of the people.

"We have revised the previous government's approach by using per capita income based on new information, including from the Cost of Living Council, as well as dialogues and engagement sessions with state governments.

"This is not a perfect approach, but based on figures provided, we have completed our goals for the first year. An additional 22,000 cases are nearly resolved, and I am confident they can be completed."

In response to a supplementary question from Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (Muda-

Muar) on the threshold for individual income levels that qualify for cash assistance, Anwar said the matter would be reviewed, taking into account the rising cost of living.

Syed Saddiq suggested that the government incorporate into law amendments regarding the setting of income thresholds, requiring it to be conducted regularly and consistently. For example, in accordance with the country's inflation rate on an annual basis or every three years.

Anwar said although there is a deficit in Budget 2025, the government is still able to increase the amount of assistance through savings and targeted subsidies, Bernama reported.

Under the Budget, the government provided the highest increase for the Rahmah Cash Contribution and Basic Rahmah Contribution, raising the amount from RM10 billion to RM13 billion to benefit nine million recipients, or 60% of the adult population.



Anwar stressing a point in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC