



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim visiting High School Bukit Mertajam in Penang yesterday, where he studied for three years. PIC BY MIKAIL ONG

PEOPLE'S HOUSING

'GOVT POLICIES WON'T OVERLOOK THE POOR:

Underprivileged deserve decent homes too, even if close to high-end areas, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the policies adopted by the unity government will not overlook the interests of the poor.

Citing the groundbreaking of Residensi Suria Madani in Taman Desa here on Thursday, he said it was a project that provided benefits and comfort to the underprivileged in the city.

"Kuala Lumpur City Hall approved it within 45 days... a record since before independence until now, as approval usually takes between eight months to a year and two months.

"But if the company, for example, provides a solid geotechnical study, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and everything else, there is no reason why approval can't be given so quickly.

"I am grateful because, in a short time, we have shown more effective implementation.

"We launched the Madani people's housing project costing RM200,000 and below (per unit) in Taman Desa, close to high-end residential areas," he said as quoted by Bernama.

Anwar said this at the groundbreaking of the Kerian Integrated

Green Industrial Park (Kigip) in Bagan Serai, Kerian, Perak, yesterday.

According to Anwar, some nearby residents had objected to the Madani people's housing project, saying it was unsuitable because it might cause dirtiness and congestion.

In response to this concern, Anwar said the luxury housing developments in the area were previously built on village land, and some of the land were purchased from poor villagers at a low price.

"So, who will clean, who will fix the electricity, who will provide other facilities if not the low-income workers? Where should they live? In remote areas? That's unreasonable.

"I do not heed such objections as long as the projects have three bedrooms, 800 square feet, good management and maintenance, besides green parks, playgrounds and guaranteed cleanliness. That is sufficient.

"Otherwise (if there is no public housing project), we would have a society that is reminiscent of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, where there is a beautiful city with a group of the poorest and a group of the super-rich."

As such, Anwar said the unity government must discard policies that undermined the poor.

"I hope this serves as a lesson for all cities and towns," he said.

On a separate issue, Anwar said all universities in the country had been told to offer courses on digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI) for students who were not majoring in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, such as literature.

He said this was to address the issue of a lack of engineers in the field to meet the needs of the industry following the investment of several giant technology companies, including Amazon, Google, Microsoft and Infineon.

"We used to say (digital and AI courses) all must be graduates of Science, Mathematics and so on, but there is also a need to take (students) majoring in literature to follow part of this course.

"When I went to India recently, there was a company there that said not all digital or AI majors must be engineering graduates, there are some literature graduates or in selected courses that can be directed to specific needs," he said.

Earlier in **Bukit Mertajam**, Anwar announced an allocation of RM500,000 for his alma mater, High School Bukit Mertajam.

Of the total, Anwar said RM225,000 would be used for the construction of a surau, while another RM275,000 would be used to address pressing needs.

"There is a request by our children for a surau. I have approved RM225,000.

"Alternatively, I am approving another RM275,000 for other pressing construction works, including for health.

"I will relook further into other needs after receiving the requests," he said during a visit to his alma mater yesterday.

Anwar studied in the school for three years.

Recalling his time at the school, he said it was a nostalgic experience for him to return to the school. **Additional reporting by Audrey Dermawan**