

Urgent need to address plight of Indian community, says Anwar

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PETALING JAYA: While poverty is most prevalent among Malays due to their larger population, the Indian community faces a far sharper struggle, particularly in abandoned estate settlements, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said their plight must be urgently addressed, with housing and livelihood issues among the top priorities.

Anwar reaffirmed that the government's poverty eradication framework is based on need rather than race with a clear focus on

eliminating hardcore poverty across all communities.

He said allocations under the Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah scheme have significantly benefited Indian households, beginning with RM500 million in 2022 and rising to RM972 million by 2025.

He also cited the RM1.2 billion Housing Credit Guarantee Scheme, along with targeted allocations for education and housing.

Responding to calls for the revival of programmes such as the Amanah Saham Masyarakat India to boost equity ownership, he cautioned against framing poverty solely in racial terms.

"Even Malays, who make up 60% of the population, have yet to reach 30% equity. The challenge cuts across all races," he said, pointing out that almost RM1 billion was directed in 2024 alone to poor Indian households, particularly in estates.

He added that long-term solutions depend on strengthening SMEs and entrepreneurship.

"We can achieve zero hardcore poverty - families having food, shelter, schooling and transport. That is achievable. But poverty as a relative concept will always exist.

"Hardcore poverty, however, we can and must end."

Anwar also dismissed claims that

aid for the Indian community is channelled solely through the Malaysian Indian Community Transformation Unit (Mitra).

He said Mitra's RM100 million allocation represents only part of a broader pool of support coordinated across ministries.

"In 2024, out of the RM100 million allocated for Mitra, RM98.9 million was spent, benefiting more than 122,000 members of the Indian community."

He said this included RM93 million in early education subsidies, RM17.6 million in higher education aid for the Indian B40 group and RM2.99 million for 6,000 laptops distributed to

Tamil schools.

He added that for this year, the government is adopting a more integrated approach, ensuring Mitra works closely with ministries to maximise impact.

"For example, if the Housing and Local Government Ministry spends RM20 million on housing projects, Mitra will top up with an additional RM5 million to cover shortfalls.

"ICT laboratory equipment for 50 Tamil schools will also be jointly funded by the Education Ministry and Mitra. The main focus remains education and poverty alleviation, but development must not be fragmented."