

'PUNISH ERRANT CONTRACTORS'

Find ways to speed up projects as delays prolong the people's hardship, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday directed the Works Ministry to take stern action against negligent contractors, including those who fail to complete projects on time.

He said this was crucial as the ministry oversees development projects that affect the public.

"There must always be efforts to expedite projects. If a bridge is scheduled to be done by January but is delayed until February, the public suffers for a month.

"If the delay extends six months, they will endure further hardship. If it is delayed 10 months, it becomes a real burden.

"Many of these infrastructure projects are the ministry's backbone. When they succeed, development succeeds," he said in his speech at the Works Ministry's monthly assembly.

Present were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar, Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi and Deputy Works Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Maslan.

"The ministry must list all projects, whether hundreds or thousands nationwide, and ensure performance records are monitored.

"We cannot simply wait until completion and must take a



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking at the Works Ministry's monthly gathering in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. He urged secretaries-general of ministries to give officers the space to provide feedback on the type of development needed on the ground. NSTP PIC BY NABILA ADLINA AZAHARI

firmer stance with contractors if they are negligent or slow to ensure projects are carried out on schedule."

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said at the state level, officers needed to go down to the ground to better understand what was needed to ensure projects were going according to plan.

He urged secretaries-general of ministries to give officers the space to provide feedback on the type of development needed on the ground.

He said such feedback should not be limited to projects already proposed.

Meanwhile, Anwar said the federal government recognised Sabahans' frustrations and anger over long-standing failures to ad-

dress basic infrastructure issues in the state.

He said the public's anxiety and lack of confidence in the federal government were understandable, even though Sabah had received the largest allocation in its history, totalling RM17 billion in development and operating expenditure.

"I understand why the people are angry. They say prime ministers, ministers and governments change, yet the water supply issue remains unresolved, electricity connections are still inadequate and roads are still riddled with potholes.

"They feel anxious and unconvinced. I do not blame them, even though the federal government has approved the largest

funding ever, with nearly RM1 billion allocated for water and RM1.2 billion for electricity.

"But with projects in Sabah still incomplete and the people having felt marginalised for so long, we understand their frustration."

Anwar said he refused to adopt the mindset of some politicians who became resentful because they felt they were not supported.

He said having endured difficult and painful experiences had given him a deeper sense of empathy for the struggles of ordinary people.

He said during his recent visit to Sabah, he vowed that Putrajaya would monitor essential services and the implementation of development programmes.