

'Sabah for Sabahans just a smokescreen for polls'

JOHANNESBURG: Parties riding on the "Sabah for Sabahans" sentiment in the state polls are doing so to obscure issues of governance and long-standing problems, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said that while it is fair for Sabahans to want leaders from within the state, it is equally important that they are represented by those who can genuinely serve them.

He added that strong federal-state cooperation remains crucial.

"Without commitment and determination from the central leadership, the people will continue to be burdened by unresolved issues. My main concern is the people," he said en route to Johannesburg, South Africa, for a four-day working visit.

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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

"Sabah rights" has become a political and emotional shorthand for efforts to address the state's challenges and push for a local leadership free from the grip of Peninsular politics, he said in response to questions on the state polls.

The state election is an opportunity to highlight what the Federal Government has delivered for Sabah, he added.

"For the past three years, this government has taken every effort to resolve the people's issues and bring development to Sabah. We will list down what has been achieved," he said, citing progress on the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) as a key example.

To date, 13 of the 29 MA63-related claims have been classified as resolved, with nine settled under the current administration.

Anwar also pointed to the Federal Government's efforts to expedite construction of the Sabah stretch of the Pan Borneo Highway, alongside consistent work to resolve the state's water and electricity issues.