

# Concern raised over low salaries in media sector

PM orders report on remuneration conditions and says firms earning healthy profits should offer fair wages

**KOTA KINABALU:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has expressed concern over the persistently low salaries of media staff, particularly in Sabah, calling the situation “unacceptable” for journalists who have served the industry for a decade or more.

Speaking at a breakfast *Sembang Santai* session with the Sabah media fraternity yesterday, Anwar said he was surprised such conditions persist despite the rising cost of living and substantial profits earned by some media companies.

“Media now is not like before because there is a lot of competition from social media, but I feel that if someone has worked for 10 years, is already a senior and the salary remains so low, I’m sympathetic. I will do my part to persuade, I will tell media companies to provide something that is fair and just. Some registered media companies secure many contracts and record quite impressive profits, so there is no reason [for low pay].”

“But journalists - I’m surprised and I have just heard that there are cases where after 10 years the salary is around RM2,000. That to me is really not acceptable.”

Anwar has instructed Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil to prepare a comprehensive report on journalists’ pay in Sabah and explore solutions, including the possibility of channeling incentives to media companies to increase salaries or allowances,

reported Bernama.

He noted that the government has set a minimum salary of RM3,100 for employees of government-linked companies such as Permodalan Nasional Berhad, Khazanah and Petronas, while starting salaries for new civil servants must not fall below RM2,000.

“This is meant to signal the private sector to review their salary structures, given the continued increase in prices and the cost of living,” he added.

Earlier, Sabah Journalists Association president Mariah Doksil raised concerns over low pay, particularly for media employees earning on a per-assignment basis. On media freedom, Anwar stressed that journalists are free to critique the government but must also fairly report its responses.

“Sometimes the problem is you attack us, but when we reply you leave it out and then you give your own views. That’s the problem - I feel it is not fair, but even then, we do not have the power to instruct the media,” he said, adding that a healthy, balanced media space is crucial for all parties, including the government, opposition and the public, especially in an era dominated by social media.

Anwar also highlighted government efforts to improve digital connectivity in Sabah, announcing an allocation of RM2 billion through the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC).

The funds will be used to expand internet coverage, prioritising colleges, universities and government offices, to enhance education services and government administration across the state.

“MCMC has set aside RM2 billion for this purpose. I have already announced it in the Budget. It will take a bit of time to complete.”

Sabah is already reaping substantial benefits from the RM2 billion Madani Submarine Cable Connection (Salam) project, unveiled during Budget 2026.

Under the National Digital Network (Jendela) plan, 4G coverage in Sabah has increased to 96.81% since 2022, up from 73.41%, benefiting an additional 877,500 residents. As of September, 5G coverage of populated areas had reached 69% through joint efforts with Digital Nasional Berhad, with further rollout by U Mobile targeting 80% state-wide coverage.

Through the Universal Service Provision initiative under Jendela, 608 out of 703 new communication towers have been completed and are operational, while 5,200 out of 5,208 existing transmitter stations have been upgraded.

A total of 309,342 premises in Sabah are now equipped with fibre-optic connectivity and all 138 planned locations for broadband using satellite technology are operational. Jendela 2, Batch 1 in Sabah is expected to involve 150 sites at a projected cost of RM120 million.

Also present were Bernama editor-in-chief Arul Rajoo Durar Raj, Broadcasting Department director-general Datuk Suhaimi Sulaiman, Daily Express editor-in-chief Datuk James Sarda and Utusan Borneo Sabah editor-in-chief Datuk Lichong Angkui.



Anwar sharing a light moment with media employees during the *Sembang Santai* session yesterday.

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