

Sabah BN says 'serious', doing its best for state
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 4 — The Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) government is "serious" and is doing its "best" to solve the issues faced by the people, including the major issue of illegal immigrants, says the coalition's state secretary Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan.

A Merdeka Center survey showed that only 54 per cent of voters polled last September felt the state was heading in the right direction compared to 66 per cent in November 2009.

But Abdul Rahman (picture) said the survey results will not have a bearing in the next general election.

"People have concerns, but I think when they go to vote, it's not just about the economy alone, it's also about leadership, it's also about whether or not the incoming government from the opposition will be better to manage the economy or not," he told The Malaysian Insider.

The Merdeka Center survey released on Tuesday showed that the top five reasons for the drop include the issue of illegal immigrants, dissatisfaction with political leadership, the high cost of living, and "the perception" that Sabah was still "lagging" behind in economic development and infrastructure.

"Look, we are trying to solve the issues. The difference between us and pembangkang (the opposition) is that we understand the issues, we acknowledge the issues and we try to do the best we can to solve the issues," Abdul Rahman said.

"We know what the problems are, people are worried about economic issues, that's why our Budget is tailor-made to address those issues," he added.

"Even if it's about the PTI (illegal immigrants), the RCI is there, that's what they wanted anyway. So it's there, it will take time but we are addressing it, that's the most important," Abdul Rahman said, adding they had "fully" supported the RCI.

The illegal immigrants issue was rated by 53 per cent of the voters polled as the most important issue in Sabah.

The state opposition has alleged that the BN government in Sabah gave out citizenships to foreigners in exchange for votes to help them stay in power.

"Political leadership doesn't mean just the government, is it? All our leaders, Anwar Ibrahim is a political leader as well, even though he's in the opposition," Abdul Rahman said when commenting on voters' unhappiness with the political leadership.

The Kota Belud MP also appeared to suggest the "gloomy" world economy had contributed to the decline shown in the Merdeka Center survey results.

"Times are tough worldwide, worldwide the economy is bad, people are gloomy... somehow it affects us one way or the other..." he said, adding that Sabah was "not isolated".

"But overall, in the whole world, people are a bit worried about the future about the economy so it's not just about Sabah."

Another top Sabah BN leader, Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak, also commented on the Merdeka Center polls that was carried out this September.

"The government is indeed serious about tackling the illegal immigrant issue and all concerned should lend their support," the Sabah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman said.

"As for the illegal immigrants, the royal commission of inquiry has started its mission and it should be left to the wisdom of its members to carry out their task, and those with grouses can go up and meet them," Salleh wrote in an email to The Malaysian Insider.

He said the people should "allow" the RCI members to carry out their job and "see what their recommendations are at the end of the day."

Salleh also said: "It would not be fair to say that there has been a lack of development when a huge chunk of the state budget, supplemented by federal funding, goes into all sorts of development.

"Looking at it objectively, the survey gives the Sabah BN the opportunity to know what's in the minds of the people and to take proactive action to address outstanding issues.

"If what has been reported is correct, then the Sabah BN must take stock of the situation and take steps to correct the misperception that development is lagging."

He had also said that "development and infrastructure are localised and these are not often highlighted in the media", having noted the state's infrastructure was developed at a "rapid pace".

"But it is true that some problems cannot be solved overnight; it is deep-rooted and when steps are taken to clear the matter, some people would be happy but there would also be others who would object."

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