

Warisan backs call to end cabotage policy

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'It doesn't matter whether we are Warisan, BN, Pakatan Harapan or United Sabah Alliance. We should all stand against the policy.'

PETALING JAYA: Parti Warisan Sabah has urged political parties in Sabah to put aside political differences and back Sarawak Chief Minister Abang Johari Openg's calling for the abolition of the cabotage policy.

This policy requires all ships carrying import and export goods to transit in Port Klang, causing prices of goods for East Malaysia to increase.

Speaking to FMT, Warisan vice-president Junz Wong said Abang Johari's call "couldn't have been more timely" as there are plans to upgrade the Sepanggar Port in Sabah into an international port.

"Nowadays, many Malaysians are struggling with the cost of living, more so in Sabah and Sarawak, where the prices of goods are higher than in Peninsular Malaysia," he said.

"Imagine that the BN federal government abolish this policy and help reduce logistics and transportation costs. This will lower the cost of doing business in Sabah and Sarawak and in turn bring down the cost of living."

Under the Malaysian cabotage policy, which affects Sabah and Sarawak, only vessels registered in Malaysia are allowed to load and unload cargoes in Malaysian ports. The idea behind the policy is for Port Klang to be the container hub port in Malaysia.

Wong said the cabotage policy had succeeded only in creating a "monopolistic cartel" that protected shipping companies at the expense of Sabahans and Sarawakians.

"Why are we protecting domestic shipping companies, which rake in millions a year, when the man on the street is struggling with day-to-day living?"

The Likas assemblyman also said such protectionist policies discouraged competition, which in turn discouraged domestic shipping operators from improving their capabilities.

"Even more ridiculous is that some local shipping companies are outsourcing to foreign and smaller local shipping companies because they don't have the capacity to do the job themselves. So much for protecting our local shipping companies."

He said the cabotage policy should just be done away with so that the industries, businesses and people of Sabah and Sarawak could enjoy lower costs and prices.

“It doesn’t matter whether we are Warisan, BN, Pakatan Harapan or United Sabah Alliance. We should all stand against the cabotage policy.”

Abang Johari made his call in a TV1 interview broadcast. He said his cabinet viewed the repeal of the policy as among the ways to lower the prices of goods in Sarawak.

He said the move would also ease efforts to develop the state’s basic infrastructure as construction materials also needed to be imported through Port Klang.

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