

View Malaysia Plan with pragmatism and realism, says Aspirasi chief

KUCHING (Sept 28): Sarawakians should view the country's national plans with pragmatism and realism, said Sarawak People's Aspiration Party (Aspirasi) president Lina Soo.

She said now with the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) being tabled in Parliament, Sarawakians must take stock and do a critical analysis on whether the national plans had achieved their targets of fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Sarawak with regard to progress and development, as promised 58 years ago upon the formation of the Federation of Malaysia.

"The fact is Malaysia has failed in its economic planning over so many decades in eradicating poverty in and bringing development to Sarawak," she commented on the 12MP, which was unveiled yesterday.

Soo cited the '2020 Household Income Estimates and Incidence of Poverty Report' released by the Department of Statistics on Aug 6 this year, to indicate the rise in the incidence of absolute poverty in Sarawak by 12.9 percent in 2020, over the percentage recorded in the same period in 2019.

She claimed: "Sarawak is officially the third poorest state in Malaysia, after Kelantan and Sabah, based on monthly gross household income, as revealed by the Department of Statistics.

"The numbers show an increase in the number of poor households in Sarawak, where 20 percent of the M40 (middle 40 per cent group, with monthly household income of RM4,840 to RM10,959) has been reduced to B40 (bottom 40 per cent group, with monthly household income of less than RM4,850), making the middle-income poor and the poor to become poorer still."

The latest five-year (2021-2025) plan, themed 'A Prosperous, Inclusive, Sustainable Malaysia', aims to steer the nation out of the Covid-19 pandemic and put the economy back on track with the focus on social welfare and protection for workers and the people, particularly the needs of the B40 group.

On this, Soo questioned that even after 11MP, Sarawak – with its abundant oil and gas resources and production, and being a major contributor to the country's GDP – had been listed as the third poorest state in Malaysia.

"Why are the people of Sarawak in the rural areas still deprived of the basic necessities such as access to clean water, infrastructure, healthcare and opportunities in education – a situation that is keeping us poorer and poorer?"

In this respect, Soo believed that Sarawakians no longer needed 'any more glamorous and grandiose Malaysia Plan'.

“We only need to gain our sovereignty over our continental shelf up to 12 nautical miles, and all the economic rights and ownership over our oil and gas (resources), and Sarawak shall be a rich nation at the top, instead of still being in the bottom today,” she pointed out.

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