

'Rights of Sabah and Sarawak, as enshrined in MA63, will be protected'

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday underscored the importance of a strong, solid relationship between the federal and state governments in ensuring that mutual goals are met.

In his speech at the national-level Malaysia Day celebration at the Sibu Indoor Stadium, he said any problems could be resolved if there was a good working relationship between the two.

He paid tribute to the Sarawak government leadership for its efforts in resolving talks on the sale of oil and gas as well as sales tax on petroleum products in the state.

"Issues deemed difficult can have a good resolution when the federal and state governments are of one direction and one heart," he said, paying tribute to Sarawak Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Abang Openg.

"This issue was successfully resolved with just some details left to be ironed out by both sides.

"I believe when both the federal and state governments are on the same page, it is the people who benefit. God willing, negotiations with the Sabah government will begin after the Sabah election."

He said the Perikatan Nasional government remained committed to ensuring that the rights of Sabah and Sarawak, as enshrined in the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), are protected.

He said during the formation of the PN cabinet, he created a portfolio on Sabah and Sarawak affairs under the Prime Minister's Department.

He said the cabinet meeting on Sept 9 had agreed to the formation of a Special Committee on MA63, which he would chair.

The committee, which includes

Sabah's and Sarawak's chief ministers and federal ministers, would discuss the states' rights as enshrined in MA63.

"I hope the establishment of this committee can help resolve several pending issues on the rights of Sabah and Sarawak, in line with MA63, and its allocations in the Federal Constitution.

"What is important is efforts to develop both states are continued and increased further with the close cooperation between federal and state governments."

He said the government would not compromise on issues related to the states' sovereignty, emphasising that Sabah and Sarawak would remain in Malaysia.

"The federal government will not bow to any party questioning our country's sovereignty."

Muhyiddin noted that Malaysia Day this year was celebrated amid

a pandemic.

"Several areas in our country, including Sabah, have recorded an increase in new cases. This shows that our struggle against Covid-19 not over yet.

"We must always be aware of the risks posed by this pandemic and continue to adopt new norms as urged by the Health Ministry."

He said the government's focus was on reviving economic sectors affected by the pandemic.

"The government has taken proactive measures from early on by channelling aid to the people through initiatives such as the Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package and Economic Recovery Plan (Penjana), at a total value of RM295 billion."

On the gross domestic product (GDP), Muhyiddin said Bank Negara had reviewed its growth forecast to between -3.4 per cent

and -5.5 per cent due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"However, the country's economy is expected to recover next year with (GDP) growth forecast at 5.5 per cent and up to 8.0 per cent, driven by continuous growth in the global and domestic economy.

"I am confident our economic recovery efforts will be bolstered through the 2021 Budget, which will be tabled in Parliament in November."

He called on Malaysians to fully embrace the meaning of Malaysia Day and to make Sept 16 a date for a renewal of the spirit of unity.

"The unity of our people, from various races, religions and regions, is the backbone of our strength as a successful nation.

"With strong unity and integrity, this Malaysia we love will remain on the right path to reap even more successes in the future."