

Diesel quota decision shows importance of East Malaysian leaders, says analyst

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Pic for illustration only.

PETALING JAYA: The federal government's decision to increase the monthly quota for subsidised diesel to 400 litres underscores the importance of the role played by East Malaysian leaders, an analyst said.

Arvin Tajari of Universiti Teknologi Mara said the likes of Sabah and Sarawak affairs minister Mustapha Sakmud must ensure that regional interests are highlighted, especially those that have a direct impact on the lives of East Malaysians.

Chief among these concerns are the subsidies for petrol and diesel, as the use of private vehicles in Sabah and Sarawak is different from other parts of the country because of the geography of the interior regions.

“As a minister tasked with looking into the interests of Sabah and Sarawak, Mustapha plays an important role to ensure their concerns, such as the subsidised RON95 and diesel are highlighted. He is now seen as someone who listens to the people,” he was quoted as saying by FMT.

He said the decision to increase the monthly diesel quota from the previous 300 litres, would help reduce the burden on consumers, especially those in rural areas in Sabah and Sarawak, as they cover a lot of ground.

Last Sunday, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim also announced that the subsidised RON95 quota would be raised from 200 litres to 300 litres from Sept 1. The move would benefit more than 16 million users, while the higher quota for subsidised diesel will benefit more than 500,000 owners of diesel-powered pickup trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Arvin said ministers from Sabah and Sarawak must now focus on welfare issues which may require a different policy than that in Peninsular Malaysia.

By pushing for a resolution to such issues, Arvin said these leaders would boost the people's confidence that their views would be taken into account when the federal government draws up new policies or refines existing ones.

Separately, Syahrudin Awang Ahmad of Universiti Malaysia Sabah said the decision to increase the fuel quotas was an encouraging sign that East Malaysian leaders were able to contribute in the drafting of federal policies.

“In the future, negotiations will revolve around data and inclusive engagement, which allows local leaders to champion other issues such as infrastructure development and economic autonomy,” he said.

“But they (leaders) must be proactive and critical-minded to ensure that policies formulated by Putrajaya are sensitive to Borneo's aspirations, especially in terms of development and job opportunities.”