

## | Higher fuel quotas show Borneo concerns can shape federal policy, say analysts

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*The monthly subsidised diesel quota for eligible pickup trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles would be raised to 400 litres, while the subsidised RON95 quota would increase from 200 litres to 300 litres. – Bernama photo*

PETALING JAYA: The increase in subsidised fuel quotas shows that concerns raised from Sabah and Sarawak can translate into changes at the federal level, say analysts.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim had announced that the monthly subsidised diesel quota for eligible pickup trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles would be raised to 400 litres.

He also announced that the subsidised RON95 quota would increase from 200 litres to 300 litres from Sept 1.

The higher RON95 quota is expected to benefit more than 16 million users, while more than 500,000 owners of diesel-powered pickup trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles will benefit from the revised diesel entitlement.

Universiti Teknologi Mara senior lecturer, Arvin Tajari, said the move was significant because fuel consumption patterns in Sabah and Sarawak could differ from those in Peninsular Malaysia, particularly for people living in the interior.

He said longer travel distances, difficult terrain and greater dependence on private vehicles meant some national policies required greater sensitivity to conditions on the ground in East Malaysia.

Arvin said this also highlighted the role of ministers such as Sabah and Sarawak affairs minister Mustapha Sakmud in ensuring such concerns were brought to Putrajaya's attention.

"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.

Arvin said the development should encourage East Malaysian representatives to identify other areas where a uniform national policy may not adequately reflect conditions in the two states.

He added that welfare, transport and other cost-of-living issues could require different approaches because of Sabah and Sarawak's geography and development needs.

Successfully bringing such concerns into federal policymaking would also strengthen public confidence that local realities were being taken into account, he said.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah senior lecturer Syahrudin Awang Ahmad agreed, saying the quota increase was an encouraging indication that East Malaysian input could have a meaningful role in shaping federal policy.

"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 must be proactive and critical-minded to ensure that policies formulated by Putrajaya are sensitive to Borneo's aspirations."

Syahrudin said evidence-based engagement would give East Malaysian leaders a stronger basis to push for policies that better reflect conditions in Sabah and Sarawak.

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