

# Clean water for 1,000 Ranau folks, finally

RANAU: More than 1,000 villagers in Kg Kigiok-Solong can now enjoy clean water daily due to Etiqa's Clean Water project.

Funded by Etiqa and implemented in collaboration with Islamic Aid Malaysia (IAM), the undertaking is part of Etiqa's corporate responsibility (CR) commitment towards healthy living, under its Etiqa Cares flagship programme.

For the past 20 years, the villagers here have been severely impacted by the lack of water supply. Water pressure for the village is constantly low, and the problem is amplified during the dry season when there is no water at all.

The existing piping system is old and damaged, with the growing number of villagers disrupting their activities such as cooking, bathing and washing clothes.

To resolve the village's water woes, Etiqa installed two 2000-gallon cylindrical tanks with electric pumps and a membrane filtering system to ensure that only treated water reaches their homes.

Nine kilometres of pipes have also been laid to connect water from the catchment area to their homes. Standpipes have been placed near the pump house to enable villagers to take their supplies directly from the tanks.

The project was successfully completed within two months with the help of villagers and volunteers from IAM.

The launch was officiated by Regional

Chief Executive Officer, Sabah Region, Etiqa, Aldo Kok and President of Islamic Aid Malaysia, Zawahir Abdullah, while witnessed by villagers.

Aldo said, "Etiqa is pleased to work with IAM on this special project. We hope that with the water treatment system provided, villagers no longer have to worry about being exposed to polluted water.

"We also hope the project can facilitate them to enjoy a sustainable supply of clean water for their daily activities throughout the year. We hope that the system will be well taken care of so that the villagers will be able to enjoy clean water for many years to come.

"In line with our vision of 'Making the World a Better Place', Etiqa's Clean Water Project is testament of our commitment to serving the society by improving lives and uplifting the community socially and economically, with a focus on the underprivileged community across the country," he added.

Zawahir said, "IAM plays a key role in bringing individuals and corporations wishing to extend humanitarian and welfare efforts in assisting those in need, together.

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to work with Etiqa to implement a meaningful and useful project for the residents here. This is proof of Etiqa's concern in improving the standard of living of the com-



Zawahir, Aldo and villagers with the tank and pump house donated by Etiqa in the background.

munities in Malaysia.

"I am proud to say that the people here are united and have a high level of co-operation to make this project a success. I look forward to a continuous supply of clean water for the people of this village," he said.

In the officiating ceremony held in Mini Dewan Kesoga Kigiok, Etiqa and IAM also distributed donations in the form of food items and cash to the villagers here.

KUALA LUMPUR: In the Dewan Rakyat, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim will have to contend with a strengthened Islamic party that espouses a stricter interpretation of shariah law, a challenge to the Pakatan Harapan (PH) chairman's vision of an inclusive society.

Anwar will likely face challenges from PAS, which emerged as one of the big winners in Malaysia's election last Saturday, risking deeper divisions in the diverse, multi-religious country.

Anwar addressed race and religion in his first news conference as prime minister, promising to uphold Islam as the official religion of the country and the rights of the ethnic Malay majority, while also safeguarding the rights of all.

PAS, long a powerhouse in northeastern parts of Malaysia, has become a national force by winning the most seats of any party, 49 of the total of 222, nearly triple its tally in the 2018 general election (GE14).

PAS has banned cinemas and advocated caning as a punishment for homosexuality in states that it runs and put its religious appeals front and centre in the election, with one leader saying voters would "go to hell" if they voted for Anwar's coalition.

Race and religion are thorny issues in Malaysia, where Muslim ethnic Malays form a majority in a country with significant ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indian minorities, most of them Hindu, Buddhist or Christian.

As the biggest party in Parliament, PAS could push for Islamisation and more affirmative action for Malays - a long-standing policy that Anwar has opposed, analysts said. PAS could also play up its religious credentials to distinguish itself from other Malay-centric parties, they say.

"PAS' big victory in this election proves that Malay and Islamic politics is still the dominant core of Malaysian politics," said Izani Zain, an associate professor at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

'Religious rhetoric'

The election illustrated how polarised Malaysia has become.

While on the one hand, PAS did well on its own, Anwar's bloc of progressive parties, which includes the predominantly ethnic Chinese DAP, won the most seats of any alliance.

A conservative, predominantly Malay-Muslim coalition led by Muhyiddin Yassin, which includes PAS, came second.

The result was a hung Parliament with no bloc winning a majority. In the ensuing five-day crisis, ethnic tensions came to the fore on social media.

In the midst of the standoff, PAS called for all parties to respect the con-