

# Please be patient, civil servants

## Raising salaries now will increase budget deficits, says Prime Minister

By **MAZWIN NIK ANIS**  
mazwin@thestar.com.my

**PUTRAJAYA:** While the government has agreed in principle to review civil servant salaries, increasing them now could result in an even larger budget deficit, says the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said a higher deficit would result in investors lacking confidence in the government's political will to manage the country well.

He stated that he was aware of Cuepacs' request for a salary review in the civil service.

"While I agree in principle with a revision, I must point out that there are issues such as the country's debt and deficit that must be looked into.

"If we increase the salaries of civil servants, it will increase our deficit numbers," he told reporters after delivering his keynote address at the International Forum on Islamophobia here yesterday.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the national debt has reached RM1.5 trillion, while the deficit stands at 5.6%. He appealed for patience among civil servants as the government finds ways to resolve the country's finances.

"Please be patient for a while. As it is, I have tried to ensure that the country's revenue is given to the people as much as possible in Budget 2023," he added.

Cuepacs had expressed its disappointment that Budget 2023 did not address the rising cost of living,

which continues to be a burden for civil servants.

Its president Datuk Adnan Mat said there was no commitment by the government to raise the wages of civil servants to match the high cost of living in the federal budget.

He had said that civil servants wanted a new remuneration system, pointing out that the current one has not been reviewed since November 2002 and is not suitable for the current economic climate.

In Budget 2023, civil servants in Grade 56 and below are to receive a special financial aid of RM700 for Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

A special aid payment of RM350 would also be given to civil servants on contract and government pensioners.

On another matter, the Prime Minister defended the RM10mil allocation under Budget 2023 for the Quran to be translated and distributed worldwide, saying this effort was to help create a deeper understanding of the religion and to address Islamophobia.

Anwar said that while there were parties questioning this spending, he believed this initiative would benefit Malaysians, too.

"Why do people say it (the allocation) is a lot? We must get people to read the Quran and its translation so that we can understand the religion better.

"With deeper understanding, there will be no clash of ideologies, no divisions, no extremes, and no violence," he added.

During the tabling of Budget 2023, Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said that RM10mil will be allocated to translate and distribute the Quran in Swedish and other major languages.

On Jan 27, the Prime Minister said that Malaysia would immediately issue one million copies of the Quran to be distributed around the world as a response to the burning of the holy book in Sweden.

Anwar had said that Malaysia strongly condemned the recent act of extremist right-wing Swedish-Danish politician Rasmus Paludan and proposed that the Quran be distributed globally as the most beneficial way to respond to the impudent and brazen act against the holy book.