

Anwar: Cash aid is to help rakyat

DUNGUN: The special cash assistance announced by the government was to help alleviate the burden of the rakyat and is not an election gift, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said those who accused the government of distributing cash handouts to win votes were tone-deaf and insensitive to the rakyat's plight.

"These are wealthy people who speak without their brains.

"Let me ask you here: do you want the money now or at the next tabling of the Madani Budget, which will be in October?" he asked the audience at the Sentuhan Kasih Desa Terengganu programme in Bandar Al Mukatfi Billah Shah here yesterday.

In response, the audience erupted in unison: "Sekarang!" (Now).

Anwar also said the decision was made after considering the low wages among civil servants which needed to be addressed.

"I admit the salaries of civil servants are low. A prime minister who had governed for 22 years never thought about or studied the need for this.

"The Chief Secretary Tan Sri Zuki Ali told me a committee chaired by me will be formed to look into this matter and will take a long time, up to six months.

"While we are waiting for the results of studies, we decided to give out the assistance now."

Prime Minister
Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

"While we are waiting for the results of studies, we decided to give out the assistance now," Anwar said.

On Thursday, Anwar announced the launch of an initiative whereby the government will be providing RM300 to civil servants of Grade 56 and below, as well as RM200 to pensioners. These payments will be made within the next two weeks.

Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil has refuted allegations that the special aid and assistance announced under the Ekonomi Madani initiative were political in nature and distributed in conjunction with the



Meeting the people: Anwar greeting the congregation after Friday prayers at Masjid Sultan Muhammad in Bukit Besar, Kuala Terengganu. - Bernama

six state elections next month.

He said the announcement on the special aid and assistance was made before the campaign period for the six state elections even started.

In the same event, Anwar refuted a claim by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who said Perikatan Nasional, the coalition he is backing, will win five out of six states in the upcoming polls.

Anwar said the outcome will be the opposite, as reflected by the results in the previous 15th General Election (GE15), where

Dr Mahathir lost his deposit.

"In the last GE15, he said he would win 'big' in Langkawi. However, when the results came in, he lost his deposit.

"His votes were so low, not even one-eighth of the total votes. Now, he says they (Perikatan) will win five of the six states.

"Based on his last experience, they will lose the polls."

During the same event held at the Central Terengganu Development Authority (Ketengah) offices, Anwar also announced assistance to the needy through the Rural Development Ministry.

These include RM500,000 for both Kelantan and Terengganu under the Social Amenities Programme, over RM12.5mil for the Hardcore Poor Housing Programme, and RM250,000 for Skills and Career Training Programmes.

Assistance will also be provided for other agencies under the ministry, including Mara, the Rubber Industry Smallholder Development Authority (Risda), Felcra (the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority) and the Orang Asli Development Department (Jako).