

## NEXT MONTH'S AGENDA

# CABINET TO RESOLVE MINIMUM WAGE ISSUE

PM says review of civil servants' salaries, including bonuses and perks, will be a top priority

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**T**HE cabinet will, next month, discuss the issue of minimum wage so that a permanent solution can be found.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said minimum wage was still difficult to implement as things were "still a little chaotic".

"That's why in the cabinet meeting next month, we want to resolve it once and for all," he said at the Labour Day 2023 celebration themed "Workers — Platform of Catalyst for Malaysia Madani".

The minimum wage order came into effect on May 1 last year. It was set at RM1,500 for all sectors for employers with five or more employees, while implementation for those with fewer than five employees had been postponed to July 1 this year.

Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar had said employers in the relevant categories were given a six-month delay in implementing the minimum wage.

He said the decision was made by the government after taking into account the readiness of employers in the category to enforce the new minimum wage for their employees. Anwar gave his assurance that his government would prioritise an increase in wages for workers nationwide.

"I don't want employers, economists or ministers to dispute (wages). Our responsibility is to increase wages for private and public workers," he said.

The prime minister also lamented the fact that while some companies had recorded increases in profits, employees' wages had remained stagnant.

He also gave his assurance that the government had made a review of salaries for civil servants a top priority. He said this was the Malaysia Madani government's commitment, even though the



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim presenting an exemplary worker's award to Dr Malar Santhi Santherasegapan at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday. With him are Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (left) and Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar (second from right). BERNAMA PIC

nation's finances were not in good shape when the current administration took over last year.

"It is time that we review the salaries of civil servants, even though when we took over, the country's finances were in dire straits with a debt of RM1.5 trillion," he said.

However, Anwar urged civil servants to be patient and to afford the government a little time to resolve the issue.

"To me, in a year's time, if there is an upward trend in our finances, the first thing I will look into is the salaries of civil servants. Apart from that, whatever bonuses and perks — including health — that we can give, we will prioritise," he said.

Anwar also asked workers, both in the public and private sector, to join forces with the unity government and declare war on corruption. The nation, he said, was in massive debt partly because of the economic climate, but also due to the theft of government coffers and a fractured economic system.

"If you want the economy to progress, if you want the revenue to increase, we need to fight and get rid of big time corrupters.

"I want workers to be in line with me. We rise and go to war against corruption. But some of them say, 'This is revenge'.

"What revenge? You steal hundreds of millions of ringgit, we take action and you say it is revenge.

"Do you ever hear them talking about the fate of factory workers or civil servants?

"What they do is defend (corruption), say do not take revenge on corrupters and robbers in the country.

"Luckily I am the prime minister, so I am mindful of my language. I control it. If not, I will *gasak* (let loose) all the way," he said.

Anwar said it was difficult for the government to provide an additional RM200 a month to civil servants amid the weak economy, but it was easy for big figures and leaders to scoop up hundreds of millions of ringgit from government coffers.

Anwar added that he was grateful that the components of the unity government had collectively agreed to stop the old destructive ways and rise to the spirit of Malaysia Madani.

The government, he said, was doing all it could to weed out corruption and save millions of ringgit through efforts such as renegotiating contracts and returning the extra funds to the people.

"I thank the Inland Revenue Board, which has now become stricter in collecting taxes from bigwigs who earn billions but pay little in taxes. This is why there has been an increase (in revenue)," he added.

Page 1 pic: Workers celebrating Labour Day at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.