

# PM: SUBSIDY REVISION CRUCIAL

**It will allow targeted groups like the B40 to better benefit from subsidies, says Anwar**

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Malaysia is among the few countries that offer subsidies which are enjoyed by all, including the rich and foreigners.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this was why it was crucial for the government to restructure its subsidy programme, so that targeted groups like people in the Bottom 40 category would better benefit from it.

He said he was against the giv-

ing of subsidies when it was proven that the rich were taking advantage of them.

Anwar cited Malaysia's subsidised rates for performing the haj under Lembaga Tabung Haji (TH) as an example.

"So when TH gave subsidies to its contributors, who earned RM1 million a month and still supported them to perform the haj, I said 'no'. They can afford to pay for it themselves. TH can assist them, but not with a subsidy.

"It will be great if the subsidy allocation goes instead to farmers, fishermen, government servants, police and the armed forces," he said at the launch of the national-level Madani Medical Scheme and Madani Afiat Programme in Bulatan Sultan Azlan Shah in Bandar Meru Raya here.

Anwar said although the prices of sugar and fuel in Malaysia were low due to subsidies, they would probably need to be retained as these were related to necessities and food.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim greeting nurses at the national-level Madani Medical Scheme and Madani Afiat Programme in Bandar Meru Raya, Ipoh, yesterday, p c by l. manimaran

He said fuel price had been constantly changing due to various factors.

"There is a video clip of me in 2008, where I said if we (PKR) win (the election), the price of fuel will be decreased 'tomorrow'.

"At that time, the price of fuel in Saudi Arabia was 50 sen (per litre), and ours was higher than that.

"But today, our fuel price is lower than that of Saudi Arabia's. Do you still want to ask me to decrease the price of fuel? The county will go bankrupt (if I did)."

Anwar said it was unfair for rich people to enjoy the significant amount of subsidies in public healthcare because they could afford to pay for private healthcare.

"For those who seek treatment

at public hospitals, the fees are free, but some rich people enjoy this (public healthcare subsidies).

"Is wrong for the government to say that all people can get treatment, but the rich must pay higher fees?

"So, who are the rich? Those who earn RM40,000 per month. Some even earn RM1 million per month."

Anwar said it was a good idea to review the sugar subsidy because this was related to diseases.

"If the price of sugar is low, the number of diabetes cases will increase. Should we introduce a system where we increase its the price, and people can reduce their sugar intake?"

Anwar said the government could instead channel the mon-

ey saved from the rationalisation of sugar subsidy to programmes aimed at preventing non-communicable diseases like diabetes.

Anwar said Malaysia would continue to provide subsidies.

"When people ask me 'can this subsidy be continued?' Yes. 'Can fuel subsidies be continued?' Yes.

"But don't give (subsidies) to the millions of foreigners. Singaporeans entering Malaysia enjoy the (fuel) subsidy. Thais entering Malaysia enjoy it too. Those with four Mercedes-Benz cars also enjoy it.

"So we have to restructure the subsidies so that the targeted groups can enjoy the benefits," he said, adding that he did not want to see the country's debt continue to increase.