Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim trying out the 'blender bicycle' at the launch of the Madani Medical Scheme and Madani Afiat Programme at Bulatan Sultan Azlan Shah in Ipoh yesterday. With him is Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa (left). PIC BY L. MANIMARAN

SECOND MADANI BUDGET

PM: HEALTHCARE A KEY FOCUS OF 2024 BUDGET

Govt will continue efforts to strengthen healthcare system, says Anwar

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Healthcare will remain a key focus of the 2024 Budget, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the Madani Budget 2 would continue efforts to strengthen the national healthcare system.

"In the last Madani budget, the Health and Education Ministries received the highest allocation.

"We must ensure quality education in the country. For instance, all school toilets in the country will be fixed by the end of this month.

"In Kelantan, nine clinics have been completed and several are being built.

"So for the Madani Budget 2, the healthcare sector, especially clinics and hospitals, will continue to be our priority," he said at the national launch of the Madani Medical Scheme and Madani Afiat Programme at Bulatan Sultan Azlan Shah here.

Present were Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa, Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar and Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad.

Anwar, who is Tambun member of parliament, said when he visited Sultanah Aminah Hospital in Johor, he found it too crowded, lamenting that a similar scene could be seen in many hospitals across the country.

"People have criticised me, saying that since Anwar became prime minister, hospitals have become crowded.

"This problem has been going on for years. Due to inadequate allocations and lack of fast action, the problem has worsened.

"I will settle it. During discussions with the cabinet and Finance Ministry officers, we will focus on healthcare."

On yesterday's programme, he said the allocation for the Health Ministry would be announced on budget day, Oct 13.

In the 2023 Budget, the Education Ministry received the biggest allocation at RM55.2 billion, up from RM52.6 billion in 2022.

The Health Ministry received RM36.3 billion, up from RM32.4 billion in 2022.

Dr Zaliha said 112,887 B40 households had benefitted from the Madani Medical Scheme since it was introduced in June.

She said within three months, 181,460 people received outpatient treatment at 1,587 private clinics under the scheme.

She said the scheme was announced in the 2023 Budget and began on June 15 to help the B40 group get acute primary healthcare treatment at private clinics near their homes.

"The scheme started with a pilot project in 10 areas that have congested hospitals, then expanded to the target areas throughout the country on Sept 15," she said in her speech.

She said the Health Ministry would improve the scheme with input and suggestions from various parties to meet the healthcare needs of the people.

She said improvements that had been implemented included making more medicines available for prescription and increasing funds for private clinics, including for the cost of procedures and X-rays.

"The ministry will regularly evaluate whether to expand the service scope, including for dentistry.

"To digitalise healthcare services, ProtectHealth has developed an application to facilitate patient affairs, such as checking for eligibility, searching for clinics, checking the balance of benefits under the scheme and OTP verification when receiving treatment at clinics."

She said the Madani Afiat Programme focused on "touch point" activities, such as house visits, which gave the ministry's top management, community leaders and medical teams a chance to engage with the people.

She said the ministry also held programmes in collaboration with other agencies to organise interactive activities for the people.

Page 1 pic: Nurses at a ward in Bukit Mertajam Hospital in June.