

NACCOL OUTLINES STEPS

TO EASE COST OF LIVING

Initiatives mooted to ease economic hardship faced over rice supply, chicken, egg prices, says PM

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THE National Action Council on Cost of Living (NACCOL) yesterday outlined initiatives to ease

the economic hardship faced by the people, covering issues such as rice supply and chicken and egg price controls.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said although Malaysia's inflation rate had subsided to two per cent, the lowest in almost two years, the unity government remained committed to continuing intervention programmes such as Payung Rahmah and Agro Madani Sales.

"The initiatives will continue with the cooperation of state governments for the benefit of the people as part of the unity government's efforts to address cost of living issues."

He said three consideration papers and two notice papers on cost of living issues were tabled at

the NACCOL meeting yesterday.

The meeting, chaired by the prime minister, was attended by deputy prime ministers, ministers, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali, industry players, non-governmental organisations, association representatives and academicians.

On the shortage of local white rice supply, Anwar said government agencies such as the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (Fama) and Farmers Association Board (LPP) had been told to take a more proactive role on the issue.

"They have been tasked with acting as distribution agencies for local white rice, especially in rural areas, to ease the people's difficulties in sourcing for rice, following the intervention measures announced by the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry."

On Monday, Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu said the additional intervention measures to address the rice supply included directing Fama to increase distribution of local white rice to rural areas, including sundry shops, and providing a subsidy of RM950 per tonne for imported white rice from Oct 5 for Sabah and Sarawak.

Anwar said the NACCOL meeting also discussed the price control for standard whole chicken and eggs, implemented since February last year.

"It's important that the price control mechanism is finalised to ensure supply chain continuity."

He said the government was studying ways to make the price of medicine more competitive, so that consumers knew how much to pay and can make a choice.

"The unity government's priority is to ensure a more transparent sales mechanism for medicine via a price display system."

He said the government was aware of a possible sugar supply disruption amid a surge, in world sugar prices.

"All these issues will be tabled at the cabinet meeting soon to finalise a direction."

On another matter, Anwar reiterated Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) stand that transaction fees for using the DuitNow QR code would be waived for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

He said Payments Network Malaysia Sdn Bhd (PayNet) would do its part to ensure SMEs were exempted from the extra charge.

"PayNet will allocate resources to help alleviate the costs incurred by payment service providers, especially non-bank providers that continue to offer full exemptions to micro and small businesses."

Page 1 pic: Customers queuing at a supermarket checkout counter in Shah Alam early this year.