

Budget to focus on health, education

We will also look into overcrowding in government hospitals, says Anwar

By IVAN LOH and MANJIT KAUR
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

IPOH: Health and education will be the main focus of Budget 2024, which will also see moves to rationalise subsidies, says the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said to reduce overcrowding in government hospitals, there will be allocations for better healthcare facilities.

He said it was not just Hospital Sultanah Aminah in Johor that has been affected by overcrowding - most other government hospitals are also facing a similar problem.

"So setting up more health clinics and better facilities will be prioritised," he added.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister, said that in Budget 2023, the Health and Education ministries received the bulk of allocations.

"With that, schools that required toilet repairs got the work done this year, while nine health clinics were completed in Kelantan," he said in his speech before launching the Madani



Happy to help: Anwar presenting a bed and a reclining chair to Mohd Shahrizal Khamis during the Ramah Mesra Madani programme at Universiti Teknologi Petronas in Seri Iskandar. - Bernama

Medical Scheme and national-level Madani Afiat programme at the Sultan Azlan Shah roundabout in Meru yesterday.

Anwar said overcrowding in

government hospitals is a long-standing issue.

"I hear some parties saying that under my leadership, no action has been taken on this issue. This

has been an issue for years, and because of no prompt action and inadequate funds, the matter has not been resolved," he said.

"So the government will focus on this problem and provide better and more health facilities."

Anwar said the details would be announced on Budget Day, Oct 13.

Meanwhile, during a Ramah Mesra Madani programme at Universiti Teknologi Petronas in Seri Iskandar in the afternoon, Anwar said the rich and, in some instances, even foreigners were reaping the benefits of subsidies.

He said this called for a restructuring of subsidies to ensure that only targeted groups benefited, citing the fuel subsidy as an example.

"As for treatment in government hospitals, the rich are also benefiting, some of whom earn millions a month," he said.

"So is it wrong that the rich who seek treatment at such hospitals are charged a higher fee?"

Anwar also said that with the increase in diabetes among Malaysians, people would be compelled to reduce their sugar

intake if the price of the commodity is increased.

He also said that this year, Tabung Haji will no longer provide subsidies for those who can afford the haj.

"When Tabung Haji continued to provide subsidies to their contributors who even earned RM1mil per month, I said no, because they can afford to pay for themselves.

"But of course, the subsidy continues for needy groups such as farmers, fishermen, civil servants, and police and army personnel," he added.

Anwar said he did not want the country's debt to continue to increase.

"Investors need to see confident economic policies to make investments.

"For example, Chinese automobile manufacturer Geely will invest US\$10bil (RM47bil) to turn Tanjung Malim [Perak] into the region's largest auto city," he said.

"Geely had several times postponed this investment for a few years, but after seeing the government's efficiency, it is now interested in making that investment."