

Anwar: Subsidy for this year to surpass RM81bil

KOTA KINABALU: The total subsidy for this year is expected to surpass RM81bil, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the subsidies given by the government to the people throughout the country included electricity, fuel and food.

Even though the figure is seen as high, he said reducing the subsidy without looking at the needs

of the people is not an option of the government, which have to ensure the people are not burdened, especially by the current cost of living.

Therefore, he said the rationalisation of subsidies, which is being implemented, is important in ensuring the people received the assistance while the country's economy remains strong.

"Subsidy is an intervention by

the government to ease the people's burden. Subsidies for chicken and eggs are amounting to RM3.8bil but reducing them will raise the cost of living.

"Therefore, a more resilient policy is needed to reduce (subsidies) which is the rationalisation of subsidies.

"With such a (high) amount of subsidies, no country can survive, he said while launching the

Islamic Affairs Management Convention at Sabah International Convention Centre here last night, Bernama reported.

Anwar said through the rationalisation measure, electricity subsidy for 1% of the wealthiest group has been cancelled but 99% of the people are not affected.

The Prime Minister said he recently asked Tabung Haji to review all subsidies for the cost of

performing pilgrimage for the rich, so that the cost of the subsidy for that group could be used by more needy Muslims.

"I requested this from the Muslim community, the richest are not given subsidies to help other pilgrims.

"There are 400 pilgrims who are eligible for the subsidy (hajj) but turned it down to help others pay the cost of hajj," he said.