

'Onus on govt to explain Budget'

> People should be made to understand reasons for focus on health and education, says Anwar

PUTRAJAYA: It is the responsibility of the government machinery to explain to the people the essence of Budget 2024, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the people should be made to understand the reason for the government's focus on health and education.

"The explanation is important, it has to be clarified to the people," he said at the Finance Ministry monthly assembly yesterday.

On Friday, Anwar tabled the RM393.8 billion Malaysia Madani Budget 2024, themed "Economic Reform, Empowering the People" which is the highest budget in the country's history.

The Education Ministry received the largest allocation of RM58.7 billion, while the Health Ministry was allocated RM41.2 billion.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said Budget 2024 is a national budget aimed at giving confidence to investors and providing maximum comfort to the people.

"The Budget cannot be seen in a 'vacuum' but (one has to) also look at it from the background of economic strength, political stability, ability to pay off debts and some other basic

macroeconomic frameworks."

Regarding subsidies, he reiterated that they have been maintained, with RM81 billion allocated for the purpose.

"RM81 billion in subsidy for one year is among the highest. No country gives such a high subsidy. A subsidy is the government's aid to reduce the burden of the people."

Anwar said the government's move to provide targeted subsidies is to ensure that they are enjoyed only by deserving people.

On the electricity subsidy, he said 90% of users would continue to enjoy it while it was withdrawn for 10% who are the highest power consumers, adding that the move is expected to save the government over RM4.6 billion.

Anwar has also instructed public universities in the country not to refuse the admission of students who cannot pay fees because they are poor, Bernama reported.

He said this is to ensure that students from poor families also get to pursue higher education.

"I want no (public) university to refuse the admission of poor students. They must be allowed to register and the matter (fee



Anwar speaking with Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ketari students in the Parliament building yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

payment) be resolved by the (relevant) ministry or department.

"This is the first time in history, that no children of ours anywhere, from any race, who are poor and cannot afford (fees), can be refused university admission. They must be allowed to register."

Anwar said he had been informed that there were students from Ampang in Selangor and Tambun in Perak who were refused university admission because they could not afford to pay the registration fees.

When tabling Budget 2024,

Anwar announced that starting in January, registration fees for public universities should not exceed RM1,500, which is in line with the value of the National Higher Education Fund Corporation Advance Loan, amounting to RM1,500.