



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says the government's 2024 economic outlook will focus on political stability, followed by clarity of policies and expediting processes. BERNAMA PIC

**'FIRST TIME IN TREASURY'S HISTORY'**

# '2024 BUDGET PROJECTS CAN START NOW'

Funds have been disbursed to ministries, says prime minister

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**P**ROJECTS that were announced in the 2024 Budget can start immediately as funds have already been disbursed to the respective ministries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this was an improvement from previous years where funds were disbursed after the first quarter.

"We want to ensure that projects announced in the budget do not wait until the first quarter. We should start now.

"Since we have record achievements for 2023 projects, in 2024 we want to implement fast.

"Funds have been disbursed. This is the first time in the history of the treasury that we disburse funds to ministries in January," he said after the cabinet's two-day retreat here.

On the government's 2024 economic outlook, Anwar said the government would focus on political stability, followed by clarity of policies and expediting processes.

He said this included upskilling manpower and making changes to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

We have initiated programmes and asked the International Trade and Industry Ministry and Malaysian Investment Development Authority to coordinate and simplify processes (for investment).

"This has been the most common complaint by potential investors in most of my meetings from China to the United States, which can be resolved.

"From the interest and commitment (of potential investors), I see very positive results," he said, adding that the previous investment process could take up to a year to receive the approval of 28 agencies.

Anwar added that government-linked companies had been asked to be more aggressive in terms of boosting potential and anticipating requirements both in terms of human resources and infrastructure.

On the cabinet's retreat, Anwar said it took a different direction by calling in local and international researchers and those in the private sector.

"The retreat has taken an open-minded approach and is receptive towards criticisms and new suggestions, and will (not just) defend existing programmes and policies.

"There is still room for improvement. This is our theme for this retreat.

"The goal is to boost efforts to give the best service to the people apart from driving the growth of the economy, interpreting the Madani concept and also raising the country's ability and dignity."

Anwar said the retreat also focused on discussions on energy

transition, digital reformation, industrial plan, civil servants reform, national unity, education, TVET and artificial intelligence.

He said the government was ready to make an assessment to improve every available space, including education, digital and technology issues, with the focus for this year on implementing programmes and policies more effectively.

On the water tariff hike, Anwar said the government had only agreed to it because all the states had asked for an upward revision of the rates.

He said the government would soon decide on the appointment of the new Employees Provident Fund chief executive officer to replace Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

He said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, Inland Revenue Board and police were conducting background checks on those shortlisted for the position.

"We have candidates and we are expediting it but we must also respect the process.

"As usual, in all of our appointments, we will have to conduct checks with the MACC, IRB and police (and) that will take a few weeks," he said.

Amir Hamzah in December last year was appointed as the second finance minister in the cabinet reshuffle.

This was the unity government's second retreat since coming into power in November 2022.

It was attended by 31 cabinet members and 15 special invitees.