

# 'SUBSIDY MOVE SHOWS FIRM LEADERSHIP'

Govt proven right in rationalising diesel subsidy as country's resources are being stolen, says PM

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**P**RIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday said leaders must be firm and willing to take risks.

Speaking at a gathering with the community at Masjid Jamek Cheruk Tok Kun here, he said this was the reason for the government's implementation of the diesel subsidy rationalisation.

"Yes, the move did affect people, but we must do our best to continue providing subsidies to those who deserve them. If you believe you are entitled to subsidies, apply to us and we will assist where possible," he said.

Anwar added that savings from the diesel subsidy rationalisation would go towards the people in the form of cash aid and salary increases for civil servants, among others.

Anwar said he did not forget promises the then-opposition made in 2008 to reduce fuel prices if they came to power, though this was not possible now.

Then, the price of fuel in Malaysia was between RM1.50 and RM1.80 per litre while in Saudi Arabia, it was around 50 sen per litre.

"Now, the price of fuel in Saudi Arabia is RM2.95 per litre while our RON95 is RM2.05 per litre.

"The production cost has increased and as such we are forced to postpone plans to bring down fuel prices."

Speaking later, he said the move by Singaporean tour companies to raise ticket prices showed that the government was right to rationalise the diesel subsidy.

"Two days ago, tourist buses and companies from Singapore raised their prices because they said they could no longer receive subsidised diesel.

"This means that for decades, they have been enjoying our subsidised diesel. The same goes for fishing boats from Thailand," he said, referring to the foreign fish-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim mingling with the crowd at Masjid Jamek Cheruk Tok Kun in Bukit Mertajam yesterday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

ermen caught smuggling subsidised diesel out of the country.

Anwar said the country's subsidised diesel — meant for the poor — had been stolen and the people did not benefit.

"How much is this costing the country? As such, the diesel subsidy rationalisation is the right move to prevent our resources from being misused.

"That is very obvious. So those who want to curse us should look at all this.

"If there are any weaknesses, let us know and we can rectify them. In the beginning, there may be some issues. We do not deny that. We are aware that this is not a popular move."

Anwar said those affected would be given fleet cards. He said as such, it was reasonable for the government to rationalise the diesel subsidy.

Anwar also vowed to try his best to help reduce the burden faced by the people, particularly those in the low-income group.

"If there are ways, I will endeavour to do it,"

He cited the drop in the egg prices, saying that a study had found that Malaysians, particularly those in the low-income group, consumed large quantities of eggs.

"For families in the middle- and low-income group, especially the B40, they consume four eggs a day. They are substituting meat with eggs.

"As such, we called the companies concerned to discuss.

"We asked how much profit they are making and if it is pos-

sible to reduce it.

"We are not talking about losses, but making less profit to reduce the people's burden.

"That is why I announced a drop in egg prices yesterday (Monday)," he said.

Anwar said if there were other ways to reduce the people's burden, he would do it.

At another function, he said further discussions were needed before deciding to place the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission under Parliament's purview to ensure its independence.

He said putting MACC under politicians might have implications as, sometimes, these same politicians might come into the commission's sights.

Recently, MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baid, speaking in the *New Straits Times* talk show *Beyond the Headlines* recently, had said he disagreed with the proposal.

He said the MACC was the only agency in Malaysia to be monitored by five independent oversight bodies.

Anwar said the MACC had never been this aggressive in pursuing those involved in graft.

He said the graft-buster had showed that corruption was still occurring in the country.

"Officials from the Immigration Department, the Inland Revenue Board, police, Customs Department... they are still taking the country's wealth illegally.

"Answer to the charges with proof. Don't create. Don't use technical arguments," he added.