

## SAVING RESOURCES

# Targeted fuel subsidies 'will not punish the poor'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim believes that now is the best time for the government to implement targeted fuel subsidies to reduce the burden of national subsidy expenditures.

The prime minister said the government was focused on implementing targeted diesel subsidies before extending them to several other petroleum products.

He gave his assurance that all steps to cut fuel subsidies in the future would not “punish” the poor.

“Now we are focusing on diesel because there has been too much misuse, resulting in loss of billions (of ringgit). This is the time, and we are fully prepared.

“We will continue to implement this reform, cutting subsi-

dies without harming the poor,” he said in an interview with Bloomberg at the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha on Tuesday.

Through this rationalisation measure, Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the government could save billions of ringgit from wasted and misused national subsidy funds.

He added that he was also focused on combating corruption, as the funds saved from such activities could be redirected to programmes to assist the people.

Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli has said the government is expected to implement the targeted RON95 subsidy programme this year to optimise its resources for those in greatest need.

This will be implemented after diesel, where pilot projects to test

the MySubsidi Diesel System and the Fleet Card system for oil companies began on Feb 1.

On another matter, Anwar said any house arrest order for former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak should only be contemplated by His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, once the 1Malaysia Development Bhd cases were concluded.

He said he would only propose such a measure if the king specifically asked for his opinion.

“If the king seeks my advice, I would recommend, ‘Your Majesty, let the legal process unfold’.”

Anwar said all parties must concentrate on the proceedings of the 1MDB case rather than diverting their attention to the recent discussions surrounding Najib’s potential house arrest.

“In the end, it’s the prerogative of His Majesty to decide. As prime minister, I will uphold the authority of the king.”

On April 1, Najib, 70, filed an application in the Kuala Lumpur High Court seeking leave for judicial review to challenge the validity of the 16th Yang di-Per-tuan Agong’s addendum decree.

Subsequently, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi submitted an affidavit as a “critical witness”, expressing his support for Najib’s application for judicial review to contest the addendum decree.

Zahid, in his affidavit on April 9, said he was informed about the decree by Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz during a meeting at the Umno

president’s residence in Country Heights, Kajang, on Jan 30.

The addendum decree entails the former prime minister serving a six-year house arrest term.

Meanwhile, government spokesman Fahmi Fadzil said any discussion about house arrest for Najib would only be discussed once Anwar, who is in Kyrgyzstan, returned to Malaysia.

On another matter, Fahmi said the extension of Tan Sri Azam Baki’s contract as Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission chief commissioner was made only after careful and thorough consideration by Anwar. He said the Centre for Combat Corruption and Cronyism (C4) had the right to express any views over Azam’s reappointment.