

PM RAPS HAMZAH OVER SUBSIDIES

Anwar tells him to stop deflecting questions on PN's stance

QISTINA SALLEHUDDIN
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

DATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim has once again taken a swipe at Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin for deflecting his question about whether Perikatan Nasional is supporting the rich and foreigners over subsidy rationalisation.

The prime minister also said the opposition leader did not answer his question previously and had instead questioned him on other matters.

“My work (requires me to) visit wet markets and stalls, and when I go, I always ask about the prices and their problems.

“But I think he wants to deflect the question and avoid answer-

ing about a party that supports the rich and foreigners (over subsidies). (And) he has not answered that yet.”

He said this after attending the Postnormal Times Madani Exhibition.

He said this in response to Hamzah's call for the prime minister to check wet markets due to the rise in the cost of living, which came after questioning the announcement on diesel subsidy rationalisation.

On Saturday, Hamzah also said Anwar needed to see the increase in the price of goods himself and how the rationalisation of diesel subsidy could contribute to the increase in prices of goods.

Last Tuesday, Anwar had announced the cabinet's decision to implement targeted subsidies on fuel starting with diesel, which is projected to save the country RM4 billion annually.

Asked when the subsidy rationalisation for diesel would take place, he said the Finance Ministry would announce the mechanism for it soon.

He said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan

would make the announcement.

“(He) will provide an explanation soon,” he said.

Anwar said the targeted fuel subsidies would start with diesel and would apply to only users in the peninsula, and not those in Sabah and Sarawak.

He added that while the diesel subsidy rationalisation was announced by him, the work would be delegated to the relevant ministries.

“Some people have asked why (the prime minister did not give a full explanation). But riot all work will be done by the prime minister.

“I give the bigger picture and the framework. Follow-up actions will come later. This is why I differentiate between policy matters and details.”

On another matter, he said the cabinet would discuss the issue surrounding the cardiothoracic surgery postgraduate programme at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) on Wednesday.

He said this in response to calls by several quarters, including the Malaysian Medical Association, for UiTM to open its pro-

gramme to non-Bumiputera trainees due to a shortage of specialists in the field.

UiTM is believed to be the only university in the country that offers a parallel pathway training programme via a collaboration with the National Heart Institute.

The proposal, however, was opposed by the UiTM Student Council and several quarters who said the university was established to protect Malay and Bumiputera students.

On the appointment of a new Dewan Negara president, Anwar said the matter would be discussed with Sarawak's leadership today when he visits the state.

The position was previously held by Datuk Mutang Tagal, who died on May 10.

Mutang, who was Malaysia's first indigenous Sarawakian Dewan Negara president, was appointed to the position in February this year following the resignation of Tun Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar to be appointed as Sarawak's eighth Yang Dipertua Negeri.