

Anwar raps Hamzah over diesel subsidy criticism

TOKYO: The implementation of the targeted diesel subsidy is not intended to burden the people but rather, is aimed at the rich and the foreigners who have long benefited from the subsidy, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said diesel was not used by the majority of people and those affected, such as taxi drivers, small traders and fishermen, would be given exemptions and assistance to cover the cost increase.

"So, why is he (Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin) busy opposing it? Who is he trying to defend? We have been stressing that the targeted subsidy is to prevent the rich and foreigners from enjoying it.

"Will Perikatan Nasional subsidise the rich and the foreigners (if they come to power)? Answer that first. That is what will upset the people," Anwar said, Bernama reported.

Hamzah had said that the Prime Minister's national address had done little to alleviate concerns of the public, who were already feeling the pinch from the rising cost of living.

The Opposition Leader had also pointed out that the implementation date of the subsidy rationalisation was not specified and neither was the public informed of the government's mechanism to channel aid to the people.

On May 21, the Prime Minister announced that the Cabinet had agreed to implement fuel subsidy rationalisation with subsidies for diesel to be withdrawn for the "rich and foreigners".

Speaking to Malaysian media to mark the end of his working visit to Japan yesterday, the Prime Minister explained that large companies were being monitored to curb the increase in the price of goods and services.

Anwar said that it was normal for the Prime Minister to announce a policy and for the relevant minister to provide details and follow-up actions later.