

HELPING LOWER-INCOME GROUP

'RETARGETING SUBSIDIES IS NO ROBIN HOOD MOVE'

Withdrawal of subsidies for T15 aims to ensure fair distribution based on income, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he is not Robin Hood who steals from the rich to give to the poor.

He said the planned subsidy rationalisation for the top 15 per cent (T15) income group aims to ensure subsidies are distributed fairly and based on financial ability.

He said he was being fair in helping the lower-income group.

"If we want to take care of the poor, we must have sufficient resources.

"We inherited debts amounting to RM1.5 trillion and we do not want to tax the people heavily.

"So we are withdrawing subsidies for the ultra wealthy. The Robin Hood economic philosophy is to take from the rich to give to the poor.

"This is not Robin Hood, but merely a withdrawal of subsidies,"

he said at the Temu Anwar dialogue programme at Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia here yesterday.

He said Malaysia was among the countries with the highest subsidies and lowest tax rates in the world.

"Imagine, some of the wealthiest individuals in this country received electricity subsidies from the government under previous policies.

"These people have 10 to 15 air conditioners in their homes, which isn't fair. Are we imposing additional taxes? No.

"The government only wants them to pay the actual cost. To me, that is fair. If certain parties wish to politicise this issue, call it unfair or unreasonable, it is because it affects their business interests.

"All I want to say is that I have fought for this for a long time. We will do our best to save this country and its people."

Anwar said he was puzzled by the opposition defending the ultra wealthy.

He said debates in Parliament showed that many opposition leaders stood up for the T15.

"Look at the parliamentary debates. I'm at a loss as to why they are more keen on defending the T15 rather than 85 per cent of the population, who are in the M40 and B40 categories.

"Some say I'm *anti mahakaya* (anti-ultra wealthy). I'm not. All I'm saying is if you're rich, don't take subsidies for the poor.

"If you earn RM100,000 a month and you go to a government hospital, pay a little bit. If you're in university and your father earns RM100,000 a month, it makes sense to charge higher fees.

"This means not all student facilities will be subsidised, which I feel is fair," he said, adding that the extra costs would not greatly affect the ultra wealthy.

During the tabling of the 2025 Budget on Oct 18, Anwar announced that subsidies would be gradually reduced for the T15, with the savings being used to improve infrastructure for boarding schools and public universities.

He said this included the rationalisation of RON95 fuel subsidy in the middle of next year.

He said foreigners and the T15 enjoy 40 per cent of the RON95 subsidy, totalling RM8 billion.

In the Dewan Rakyat last week, Anwar said the government was considering raising the T15 income threshold to RM15,000 or RM20,000, higher than the Statistics Department's current threshold of RM13,000.

Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli said the government was finalising details on the parameters of the T15 group.