

PM: Why advocate for T15 and not the 85% of M'sians?

IT is strange that some MPs appear to be advocating for the wealthier T15 group rather than showing more compassion for the remaining 85% of Malaysians, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said.

The Prime Minister urged the MPs to focus on the majority of Malaysians who continue to benefit from subsidies.

"The principle of targeted subsidies must be clear. We are forced to implement this because the government bears around RM20bil annually.

"It's reasonable to expect subsidies and assistance to be channelled to the people," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He further questioned the fairness of maintaining subsidies for the wealthiest groups.

"Is it reasonable for the govern-

ment to continue subsidies for non-citizens and the top earners, including the super rich?"

"Why should we be the champions for the T15, as many opposition MPs have argued? We must ensure that subsidies do not burden 85% of the population," Anwar added.

His remarks came during a parliamentary session in response to questions from Kota Melaka MP Khoo Poay Tiong and Pasir Puteh MP Datuk Dr Nik Muhammad Zawawi Salleh regarding targeted subsidies and the implementation of a 2% dividend tax on individual shareholders earning over RM100,000.

Anwar said the decision to transition from the T20 to T15 group was made after careful consideration of household income levels,

with the review ongoing.

He said that while some within the higher income bracket may earn as low as RM13,000 per month, others are earning up to RM100,000 or more, which warrants a different approach to subsidies and taxation.

"Why is there no stance to say 'yes, it is appropriate to charge market rates to the super rich and top earners'?"

"When we raise fuel prices to reflect market rates, it applies to foreign nationals and the T15, not all Malaysian citizens," Anwar added.

In response, Dr Nik Muhammad Zawawi raised concerns about the burden on high-income individuals and the potential for investors to leave Malaysia if the 2% dividend tax is implemented.

"Many business owners, operating as individuals, already face significant expenses and tax obligations. Adding this tax could burden them further, and there's a risk of investors moving abroad," he said.

Anwar, however, expressed his concerns that the focus on protecting the wealthy seemed disproportionate.

"Are we not concerned about defending the interests of the lower-income group? It seems as though the 85% of the population are not important to us.

"Who are we defending here? Those with shares worth RM2mil?" Anwar asked.

He reiterated that wealthier individuals should also be accountable through fair taxation.

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"Are we progressive if we deny the need to tax dividends for those with millions of ringgit in shares?"

"I hope the honourable members can present other suggestions, but saying we shouldn't tax the rich seems strange and contrary to the principles of equitable wealth distribution."

Anwar also addressed the confusion surrounding the definition of T15, assuring that the government is consistently reviewing household income levels.

"We are currently discussing whether to raise the income threshold to RM15,000 or RM20,000 or something else.

"This matter is being deliberated and there is no contradiction, as some have suggested," he added.