

MORE FAVOURABLE RATES

'GOVT MULLING OVER PTPTN LOAN REVIEW'

Move possible if ultra wealthy contribute more to nation's coffers, says Anwar

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the government will consider reviewing the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) loan rates.

However, he cautioned that this could raise PTPTN's outstanding debt of almost RM40 billion currently.

PTPTN's debt is currently high. Revising the loan rates could increase it further. It could be RM50 billion.

"*InshAllah*, we will try to review (the loan rates). We will continue to help the students based on their needs and I feel we have the courage to revise," he said.

Anwar was speaking at an event with about 3,000 International Islamic University Malaysia staff members and students here yesterday.

Present were Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapha Sakmud, IIUM president Tan Sri Samsudin Osman, rector Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Anwar's senior political secretary Datuk Seri

Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari.

Students who take PTPTN loans to pursue their education at government tertiary educational institutions receive RM4,750 a year for diploma courses, RM6,650 for bachelor of science, RM6,180 for bachelor of arts, RM9,500 for Master's degree and RM24,700 for a doctorate.

At private institutions, diploma students get a maximum of RM6,800 a year, RM12,750 for those pursuing health science diplomas, RM14,030 for science undergraduates, RM13,600 for arts undergraduates, RM17,000 for Master's in health sciences and RM50,000 for a medical Master's degree.

Anwar said better PTPTN loan rates could be realised if the wealthier segments of society contributed more to the nation's coffers.

"For example, wealthy parents should pay more, so we can channel the funds to students," he said, adding that only the top 15 per cent would be affected by such a move.

"If you live in a mansion with 10 rooms, six air conditioners and

five fans, you should pay the electricity bill at the normal rate, not the subsidised rate," he said.

However, the prime minister acknowledged the sensitivity of implementing such measures.

"This is a democratic country. If we were to raise taxes, the opposition will attack me ferociously."

Anwar said Malaysia provided the highest subsidies for its people among Asean members.

"So, we want them (the ultra wealthy) to pay for electricity at the normal rate. Then, *InshAllah*, we will review the PTPTN loan rates," he said.

At the event, Anwar also witnessed the handover of a RM1.3 million contribution to the AbuSulayman International Student Fund.

The contribution was presented by the president of the Centre for Islam in the Contemporary World at Shenandoah University, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, representing Sterling Management Group, to the IIUM rector Osman.

Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman served as IIUM's rector from 1988 to 1998.

Anwar launched the AbuSulayman International Student Fund on April 24, 2019.

The fund was established to assist international students at the university.