

Govt reviewing targeted toll exemption for festive seasons

> Subsidy should only be provided to B40, M40 groups, not everyone, says Anwar

DAVOS (SWITZERLAND): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the government is working on a more targeted approach for the provision of toll exemptions during festive seasons.

He said similar to previous subsidy adjustments, toll exemptions should only be provided to the B40 and M40 groups, not to everyone.

"Some have raised the issue of why toll exemption is being given to everyone - even those driving cars such as Rolls Royce, Mercedes and Maserati benefit.

"So, perhaps we should be more thorough to ensure that the lower-income groups are given special consideration.

"This is currently being refined. Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi has only outlined the basic principles, stating that we cannot continue to subsidise everything like electricity and fuel," he told a media conference following his working visit to the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2025 annual meeting yesterday.

On Tuesday, Nanta was reported as saying that 2024 would be the final year for the provision of toll exemptions during festive seasons, and last year's Cabinet meeting had decided to seek a more targeted approach, which would be announced soon.

Meanwhile, Anwar made an indelible mark at the WEF by seamlessly navigating discussions that ranged from his favourite football club to the intricate dynamics of international relations and challenges.

His ability to balance the conversation in his engagements showcased Malaysia's unique position in global diplomacy, especially in dealing with countries with varying political ideologies and economic policies.

The first question during the "Country Strategy Dialogue" session on the sidelines of the WEF came from Manchester United Football Club co-chairman Avram Glazer regarding Malaysia's goal for sports in future.



Anwar being greeted by Netherlands Prime Minister Dick Schoof on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual summit. - *BERNAMAPIC*

Anwar replied that as a fan of the 147-year-old club, he still had hopes for Manchester United's resurgence and refused to change his preference despite the club languishing in the bottom half of the table and all his 14 grandchildren being Arsenal supporters.

Responding to Glazer's question, he highlighted the significance of sports in a multi-religious country like Malaysia and the importance of promoting it not only as an industry but also as a game to foster unity.

Anwar also addressed questions on the restructuring of Malaysia Airlines as well as improvements at Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd, including upgrades to the aerotrain.

"I am impatient to get things going (at the airport) and (for it) to be more efficient. There's no reason why the airport should function as it did in the past although it is relatively good compared with other poorer airports. But I think there's room for improvement."

Anwar also touched on topics such as healthcare, Artificial Intelligence, the Johor

Singapore Special Economic Zone, upgrading the country's legislature, free trade agreements and the need for these agreements to include digitalisation, as well as nuclear energy.

At every opportunity, he emphasised Malaysia's commitment to fostering cooperation among major powers, ultimately reinforcing Asean's role in addressing pressing economic and geopolitical challenges, *Bernama* reported.

On issues faced by Asean and the region, especially concerning tensions in the South China Sea, Anwar firmly stated that any resolution must be a collaborative one regardless of the Western world's views on it.

"We have unresolved issues with Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. (But) why is it that the problem only seems to be with China?"

"And they say, 'Oh, are you being defensive? No, it's not the case. I am simply stating the facts. Is there a problem? Yes, there is, but the issue involves the entire region. Are we going to wage war over it? No," he added.