

PM ANWAR ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES IN BUDGET 2023
DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 29 — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today announced several additional initiatives in Budget 2023.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister when tabling the Supply Bill 2023 or the national budget for the second reading in the Dewan Negara today said that the new additional initiative involves Aidilfitri assistance, an extension of individual tax relief and the provision of housing credit through the Syarikat Jaminan Kredit Perumahan (SJKP).

“Given the current situation...I looked into the cohorts which had not benefitted from the previous initiative and found that they were still struggling, especially during Ramadan and Aidilfitri.

“So, the government has agreed to give another RM200 in the Special Aidilfitri Assistance to 850,000 rubber smallholders, paddy farmers and fishermen, in addition to what was announced before. This will cost RM170 million,” he said.

Anwar said the increase is the biggest aid the government has ever given to fishermen, paddy farmers and rubber smallholders.

In Budget 2023 tabled on Feb 24, the government announced the Special Aidilfitri Assistance of RM300 per month for fishermen, RM200 per month for rice farmers for a period of three months per season as well as increasing the monsoon contribution from RM600 to RM800 for a period of four months to rubber smallholders.

Apart from that, he said 200,000 volunteers under the Malaysian Volunteer Department (Rela), Civil Defence Force, as well as police and fire volunteers, will also receive RM300 for Aidilfitri.

Anwar also announced the extension of individual income tax relief of up to RM8,000 for net savings in the National Education Savings Scheme (SSPN) until 2024.

“This was decided after hearing public concerns and complaints made to the government (after yesterday’s announcement). This will incur losses of RM250 million per year in the government’s revenue, but will benefit approximately 400,000 taxpayers,” he said.

Yesterday, Deputy Finance Minister Steven Sim was quoted as saying that starting this year, taxpayers who contribute to the SSPN will no longer be eligible to claim individual tax relief of up to RM8,000.

The prime minister also announced that starting April 1 this year, the government will expand the target of the SJKP housing credit to fixed and irregular income groups to have their first home, an initiative that is expected to benefit the B40 and M40 groups.

Under Budget 2023, the SJKP housing credit scheme had been improved by increasing the financing guarantee fund from RM3 billion to RM5 billion to help first-time home buyers, especially those with no fixed income.

Meanwhile, Anwar said the government would also give priority to the filling of public service positions in critical sectors, especially health and education, and this is expected to involve an additional expenditure of up to RM800 million this year.

He said Budget 2023 including the additional initiatives proved the Unity Government's commitment to bring changes to Malaysia, and also proof of the government's determination to improve governance to ensure the well-being of the people as a whole.

As it is indeed a great responsibility, he said all quarters should play a role to make it a success.

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