

KERATAN AKHBAR

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Rafizi: Quantum of increase for wages should be realistic with gov't's capabilities



Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli and caretaker Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor speaking to the press after attending 12th Malaysia Plan midterm review engagement and roadshow session at Royal Kedah Club here today. -NSTP/AHMAD MUKHSEIN MUKHTAR

ALOR SETAR: The unity government had acknowledged the Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) call for a 35 per cent hike on civil servants salary scheme to mitigate the escalating cost of living.

However, Economics Minister Rafizi Ramli said the quantum of increase should be realistic with the government's financial capabilities.

"Yes, demands for higher wages from the private sector, public sector, and Cuepacs are understandable. We also have many demands, and I'm sure Cuepacs is aware that the government has its constraints.

"But the federal government and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (Prime Minister) are now focusing on this issue. Perhaps we cannot fulfill everything immediately. But we want to ensure that we focus on the wage issue.

"I am also confident that the workers (Cuepacs) will eventually understand that the employers and the government also faces constraints," he said in a press conference after attending 12th Malaysia Plan midterm review engagement and roadshow session at Royal Kedah Club Alor Star.

Also present was caretaker Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor.

Yesterday, it was reported that Cuepacs demanded civil servants' salaries should ideally be raised by at least 35 per cent, taking into account the prolonged absence of salary increases and the escalating cost of living.

Its secretary-general Abdul Rahman Mohd Nordin welcomed the government's decision to review the public service salary scheme, as the last review was done years ago.

He said that current wages, especially at the lower levels of the civil service, were inadequate to cope with the increased cost of living.

Meanwhile, Rafizi stressed that the government has never taken wage increase demands lightly in line with the rising cost of living for the people.

He said that the minimum wage and allowances demand issue raised by Cuepacs has always been a government priority discussed from time to time.

"I mentioned earlier that the cost of living is not just about the price of goods. It is also about wages. If we only focus on the cost of goods and neglect wages, it is a difficult situation.

"Increasing wages is a tiring issue. So, the questions regarding wage increases is usually avoided, but we will go through that process," he added.

Commenting further, he assured that the government is diligently working towards implementing a comprehensive plan to ensure systematic and structured wage increases for public servants.

"If we don't have this progressive wage model, if it is left blindly to employers, it will never increase. That's what we're trying to do.

"Can we do this? What are the consequences for the government's finances? But my view remains the same, we will start, and I believe that's what is happening now," he said.