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Rafizi: Increasing fuel subsidy will cripple other govt plans

AVOIDING POPULIST MOVES

Rafizi: Increasing fuel subsidy will cripple other govt plans

KUALA LUMPUR: The government cannot increase fuel subsidies at the moment as it would jeopardise the implementation of other programmes and benefits for the people, said Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli.

He said although the opposition was playing up calls to reduce fuel prices, the unity government was steering clear of populist approaches and was focusing on key matters.

These, he said, included providing better infrastructure and paying civil servants better salaries.

"If we want to reduce fuel prices, we need to look at a price that is lower than the current price of RM2.05 per litre. The crude oil price is now US\$80 a barrel.

"The government provides a subsidy of RM1 per litre to maintain the price at RM2.05 per litre," Rafizi said at a Madani Tour event in Sungai Tua, here, on Sunday.

He said it would be easy to fish for votes in the state elections by promising reduced fuel prices.

"To win the state elections would not be difficult.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and I can entice the people by reducing fuel prices by another 20 sen, so that everyone will vote for us.

"However, that would mean the salary of teachers will be reduced, housing projects for the poor will not take off, issues of water supply, like in Kelantan, would not be solved and the government might not be able to help children who enter universities," said Rafizi.

He said the government was committed to carrying out initiatives for the people's well-being.

Rafizi said government revenue was only around RM300 billion a year, but huge sums had to be spent on expenses.

"The government allocates RM80 billion for subsidies, debt interest payments amount to about RM30 billion, and when we add civil servant wages and buildings rents, the amount runs into another few hundred billion ringgit." **Bernama**