

Pakatan: One-off handouts not enough to help poor
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By Salhan K Ahmad

Pakatan Rakyat MPs are sceptical that the slew of one-off cash handouts announced in Budget 2012 would be beneficial for the lower-income group and pensioners.

Bagan MP Lim Guan Eng welcomed the move but opined that the amount of handouts to senior citizens was insufficient.

"It is better if they were given RM1,000 as suggested in the Buku Jingga (Pakatan's shadow budget document)," he said when met at the Parliament lobby.

He adds that under Pakatan's shadow budget, it was made clear that the coalition pledged to provide handouts to senior citizens annually and not once-off.

"It is only when elections are near that (BN) does this. After that, no more. In Pakatan states, we provide give-outs (cash) regardless of whether there is an election or not," said Lim, who is also DAP secretary-general.

Similarly, Pokok Sena MP and PAS vice-president Mahfuz Omar said he was worried that the Najib administration would not be able to keep up with such a scheme, and withdraw it in the future.

"The PM can discontinue these policies should oil prices change," he said.

Batu MP Tian Chua said that BN appeared to have learned from Pakatan's welfare policies over the past three years and moved its focus away from mega projects.

No new sources of revenue?

However, Chua lamented that one-off cash handouts announced in Budget 2012 did little for the lower-income groups in the long run.

"What is more important is strengthening national institutions that will ensure that the nation's wealth is fairly and transparently distributed.

NONE "There must also be an emphasis on making our government institutions more efficient to curb graft and leakages," said the PKR vice-president.

Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar (left) expressed concern that Budget 2012 did not adequately explain how the federal government would increase its revenue or slash its spending.

"This is dangerous. There was nothing on increasing sources of revenue except in the real property tax gains revision. Previously, it used to be 30 percent for properties sold in two years, now it is only 10 percent.

"I am worried that the federal government does not know how to source more revenue or slash spending. And yet they talk about increasing allowances for MPs," said Nurul Izzah, who is also a PKR vice-president.

This is the 15th consecutive time the federal government had tabled a deficit budget since 1998, when Malaysia was hit by the Asian financial crisis.

Overall, Budget 2012 is an increase of 9.4 percent from the previous year, with an 11.5 percent increase in operational expenditure and 4.1 percent increase in development expenditure.

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