

**Proposed hike in MPs' allowances to be withdrawn**  
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**By S Pathmawathy**

The proposed upward revision of allowances and facilities for members of parliament will be withdrawn due to resistance from the opposition, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz said.

He said Second Finance Minister Ahmad Husni Mohamad Hanadzlah has been informed of this, and that Prime Minister and Finance Minister Najib Abdul Razak would be briefed on the matter on Friday.

Following this, the proposal will be formally withdrawn.

The proposal would have cost RM30 million to implement, if passed under Budget 2012, which was tabled in the Dewan Rakyat last Friday.

NONE "I would like to apologise to the PM and the MPs for my failure to live up to their expectations. I did my best for all the MPs but I failed to get the support I sought from my fellow MPs," Nazri told reporters in the Parliament lobby today.

He explained that he had appealed to Najib for the increase in allowances after a report submitted by a bipartisan parliamentary review committee on Oct 5.

"Now this report... will be discussed by the House (rights and privileges) committee. We have not established how much increase (there will be) in the allowance of MPs.

"But because (the report) was (given at the) last minute, when the PM was briefing the cabinet on the budget (last) Friday morning ... with the support of fellow cabinet members, I persuaded the PM to allocate a certain amount for that purpose."

Although he faced resistance from fellow ministers who said the proposal could not have come at a worse time, Nazri said: "I argued, when is it a good time? Every year will not be a good time... so when I asked when it is a good time, they (could not) answer..."

"I also argued that this has been the excuse we have been giving for the last five years (since 2004 when the proposal was mooted). (Whenever) there is a (suggestion to) increase... (it) has always been an excuse that it's not a good time."

NONENazri said Najib, persuaded by the argument and on the basis that it was a proposal to which all parties had agreed, allocated the funds "in good faith" and stated it in the Budget 2012 speech.

"I believe many MPs were elated that day ... such an increase cannot make us rich, but it only means better service for our constituents and constituencies," said Nazri.

"However, (subsequent) statements by (Opposition Leader) Anwar (Ibrahim), (DAP secretary-general) Lim Guan Eng, (PKR deputy president) Azmin Ali, (PAS vice-president) Salahuddin Ayub and Dzulkefly Ahmad - are proof that I'm not able to get the support of the opposition, as I (had) promised the PM ..."

Although not all opposition MPs have been critical of the proposal, Nazri said news reports had quoted the disapproval of the "bigwigs".

Chiding his critics for lacking concern for legislators who were full-time MPs, Nazri said: "Guan Eng is the chief minister (of Penang)... Anwar (and) Azmin, (are) wealthy men, of course this is nothing to them.

“But they are not thinking of the junior MPs who are struggling to pay for petrol when they need to visit their constituencies. These are the ones I’m thinking of... those in Sabah and Sarawak... it’s not me.”

‘They spoke too soon’

Nazri also said the parliamentary review committee’s report would be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat for the attention of the rights and privileges committee, in the event there was a “change of heart” to look into the proposal for Budget 2013.

MPs’ allowances have been revised five times - in 1992, 1997, 2001, 2002 and 2005 - since the Members of Parliament (Remuneration) Bill was enacted in 1980.

Under the last amendment in 2005, their basic allowance was increased from RM5,916.90 to RM6,508.59.

a kugan detention death funeral ummc to puchong 280109 kuala selangor mp dr dzulkefly ahmadNazri said PAS parliamentarian Dzulkefly (left) who sits on the review panel, had raised concerns and suggested that the MPs be provided funds to employ researchers.

“ ...You can’t have the Parliament employ 222 researchers to help 222 MPs... (this) is not feasible because researchers will only do work when Parliament is in session, that is (for) 20 weeks in a year... (during) the remaining 32 weeks, what (would) they do?

“So... I put (in) X amount, maybe RM2,000 to RM3,000 (for each) researcher’s allowance ... so (that the MPs) can employ their own people on a part-time basis.

“I have been MP for the last 16 years, I am a minister, I know what I’m talking about. So I factored (in) everything ... I also put in (a) certain amount for them to rent their office. Why should they pay office rental from their own salary (to serve the rakyat)?

“I also put (in a) certain amount for employment of drivers and office assistants... these are all things that a MP needs... I don’t want the MPs to pay employees from their salaries, it’s not fair, so I put it in a package.

“But unfortunately they opened their mouth too fast and because of that, I’m not able to deliver my promise to the PM. So I must be honourable and withdraw this,” he added.