

Give money back to the people, Najib urged
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been urged to make the one-off RM500 cash payout to lower-income families and the RM100 allowance to all school students an annual programme.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng today asked Najib carry out the task to prove that he is sincere in helping the people, and not just "buying his way to an election victory".

He said the payouts, which cost RM1.8 billion for 3.4 million households and RM550 million for 5.5 million students respectively, are not huge compared to government's wastages.

"There is an estimated RM1,077 billion of illicit money that was illegally siphoned out of our country from 2000 to 2009.

"This is in addition to scandals such as the RM12 billion Port Klang Free Trade Zone, the RM52 billion bumiputera share scandal and the latest RM250 million National Feedlot Corporation fiasco," he said.

The Bagan MP said it was better for the government to give back the money to the people "who sorely need aid during the times of high inflation and soaring household debt", rather than wasting it on scandalous projects.

He pointed out that the price of some basic commodities have been rising by leaps and bounds in recent times, causing hardship to millions of Malaysians:

- * Sugar: RM1.45/kg (January 2010) to RM2.30 (May 2011) - 58% in 18 months.
- * Eggs: B Grade RM9 for 30 eggs (September 2010) to RM10 for 30 eggs (now).
- * Onions: Price up 17% since December 2010.
- * Service tax: Increase by 1%, an additional RM720 million in taxes to federal government.
- * Teh tarik and kopi susu: Increase by RM0.10 to RM0.20 (9.1% to 18.2%).
- * Electricity tariff: Average increase of 7.12% in June 2011.
- * Gardenia bread: 5% to 14% hike (2011).

Lim said rising inflation resulted in high level of household debt, as Bank Negara's Annual Report 2010 revealed that Malaysia's household debt at the end of 2010 was RM581 billion or 76 percent of GDP.

"The Malaysian household debt service ratio stood at 47.8 percent in 2010, meaning that nearly half of the average family's income goes to repaying debts. In other words, we are spiralling into an indebted nation."

Lim also called on Najib to implement the cash payout annually besides fixing a minimum wage for the workforce.

"Only then we can dignify Malaysians by improving their standard of living and quality of life," he added.

Najib has recently announced the one-off RM500 aid to households under Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (BR1M) scheme and RM100 payment to students, but critics have regarded this as a gimmick ahead of the general election.

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