

Anwar gives glimpse into Pakatan's PTPTN policy

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By Nigel Aw

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim today admitted that Pakatan Rakyat has not hammered out the details over its promise to waive the PTPTN students' loan, but offered a glimpse of how Pakatan would handle it.

The PTPTN debt which amounts to RM43.6 billion, he said, could be written off within three years.

anwar ibrahim meets young professionals "If we allocate a few tens of billions from the (country's) RM150 billion annual revenue each year, we should be able to clear it," said Anwar in a dialogue with over 100 young professionals in Subang Jaya.

The funds he said, would come from cuts to wasteful spending such as expenditure to boost the country's image, and from huge profit-making GLCs such as Petronas.

"For families who make more than RM10,000 a month, do they need to pay back (the loan)? These details we need to work out.

"Have we? No. But the principle will be that the poor cannot be punished," he said.

The details, adds Anwar, is being worked on by a committee.

When approached later however, the opposition leader declined to reveal details about when the policy draft will be completed.

"But what we can do immediately is to look into the (issue with the) impounding of passports for those who had not (repaid) PTPTN. That is unreasonable," said Anwar.

"We will move forward based on the principle that education from primary to tertiary should be free," he added.

BN skirting free education

Commenting on Higher Education Minister Khaled Nordin's assertion that free education will not eliminate the need for the student loan that the minister argued covered living costs, Anwar admitted that some "additional funding" may be required.

ptptn one stop centre kl sentral 260307 entrance However, he said that this should not be used as an excuse to skirt any efforts to implement free education.

Asked by eager participants if Pakatan-ruled Selangor would take the lead by implementing such a policy first with its state-owned Universiti Industri Selangor (Unisel), Anwar said this was the responsibility of the state government.

"We have proposed it to the Selangor government. Selangor has a slight edge (financially) but we do not want to create a precedent where other states will be burdened.

"The role of the state government is to be the backup to the federal government. If there is not enough (funds), then they can give additional help," he said.

NONE An example, Anwar said, was state funding for vernacular schools in Selangor even though it is

under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Pakatan's plan to write off PTPTN loans and to implement free education, not part of its Buku Jingga manifesto, has generated debate on its feasibility.

The BN government has dismissed the opposition's plans as impractical.

Meanwhile student group Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia is planning a rally on Apr 14 to demand for PTPTN's abolition.

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