

## **Anwar moots wide-ranging education reform**

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**By Leven Woon**

Pakatan Rakyat will draw up an education reform proposal outlining steps to provide all-inclusive free education up to university level in the event the coming general election puts the coalition in charge of Putrajaya.

NONE Opposition Leader and MP for Permatang Pauh Anwar Ibrahim delivered the pledge at a forum on free education last night when fielding a question from an undergraduate who expressed fear that abolishing the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) would prevent students from getting a living allowance.

Anwar said going by the real definition of "free education", the government should bear the cost of the living allowances of students.

"If additional allowances are needed under certain circumstances, we can provide these in the form of a loan," he said.

Apart from this, Pakatan's education reform would also address issues such as abolishing the PTPTN, campus autonomy, bolstering teaching staff and revving up the number of public universities.

NONE Anwar said he would task government-linked companies (GLCs) to build new public universities to ensure enough places for higher education for all Malaysians.

Describing the wide-ranging reforms as a move to "democratise access to education", he repeated Pakatan's stance that this could only be done by utilising revenues from state-owned oil company Petronas, curbing corruption and reducing gas subsidies to Tenaga Nasional Bhd and the independent power producers (IPP).

Nizar: Scrap wasteful national service

The three-hour forum themed 'Free Education, PTPTN Abolition: Is it a Dream?' was also attended by ousted Perak menteri besar Nizar Jamaluddin, Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia chairperson Mohd Safwan Anang, Malaysia Bangkit president Mohd Syahid Mohd Zain and Gamis president Akram Taib Azamuddin.

Nizar drew a round of applause when he said in his speech that the National Service Training Programme (PLKN) and National Civics Bureau (Biro Tata Negara), should both be abolished and their expenses be directed to education.

NONE "Every year, we spend RM650 million for the national service scheme and RM500 million for BTN, but these programmes do not contribute any significant value to the country.

"We should save this money for education instead," Nizar said.

He described PTPTN as a form of suppression of students from speaking up against the authorities and said it also produced ignorant students.

Safwan, a Universiti Malaya student leader, lamented that the campus student body elections, which had been slated for March, have since been put off to September.

"I believe the government has postponed the student elections until the general election is over because it

fears that the BN will be rejected by the youngsters.

"We won in many campuses in 2008 and as a result, the political tsunami took place and the BN lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament," said Safwan.

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