

Pakatan: Get treasury to verify cost of election pledges

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The treasury could play a role in verifying the financial viability of election promises across the political divide during the next general election campaign.

Calling for this, Pakatan Rakyat explained that this would help explain to voters whether or not the pledges are realistic, as well as the implications for the nation's financial health.

Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong , speaking to journalists after Pakatan's secretaries meeting this afternoon, noted that the treasury could step in as a "neutral party".

He further said it could provide "concrete figures and detailed budgetary information" to both the BN and Pakatan.

Also present were PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution, PAS secretary-general Mustafa Ali, Kuala Selangor MP Dzulkefly Ahmad, Kuala Krai MP Mohd Hatta Mohd Ramli and the PAS president's political secretary Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar.

The suggestion was part of Pakatan's "greater budget integrity" proposal which was revealed after the meeting at the PAS headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

In a joint statement later, the Pakatan secretaries called for an independent Parliamentary Budget Office to provide MPs with economic and budgetary analysis in assisting them to make important financial decisions.

"This would ensure neutral and objective analysis of cost projections and estimates. Public budget hearings should also be organised by this office," they said.

They are further seeking a bi-annual budget update by the treasury and a review of the government's practice of tabling large supplementary budgets.

Bipartisan budgetary committees, they said, should be formed to tackle needs related to:

- national and international affairs
- economic and finance
- security
- education, talent and employment
- agriculture and regional development
- infrastructure, resource management and environment
- community well-being

Liew expressed the hope that BN parliamentarians will take up the proposals in the next sitting of Parliament, scheduled from Sept 24.

'Appoint full-time finance minister'

Saifuddin called on the government to appoint a full-time finance minister ahead of the gloomy economic outlook.

"We have had a deficit for 14 years and it is coming to a stage where the finance minister cannot be burdened by the duties of the prime minister. We are approaching the debt ceiling of 55 percent," he said.

"This is one of the main reasons why the finance minister must be focused and cannot be occupied with attempting to defend political power."

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is finance minister and acting minister for the women, family and community development portfolio.

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