

Najib's absence queried as Budget debate begins

MalaysiaKini.com

1 Oktober, 2012

Oleh Nigel Aw

Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim took a swipe at Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's absence in the Dewan Rakyat today, with his kick-off on the debate on the Budget 2013 proposals.

"The tradition during the debate is for the finance minister (Najib) to be here. But when I invite him to debate, he doesn't dare. Now, even in Parliament, he doesn't dare show up," noted Anwar (right).

"He lets his backbenchers defend (the budget) but they have never been in the cabinet. They don't know the figures and can only depend on the Departments of Statistics. The finance minister should give them some notes next time."

He was referring to figures cited by Abdul Rahman Dahlan (BN-Kota Belud) showing that the federal government was providing more money than the revenue collected in all states led by Pakatan Rakyat.

"You can question the numbers, but this is what the Department of Statistics is giving," Abdul Rahman (left) said in his intervention.

Anwar responded that statistics can be manipulated to lie.

"It is not true to say that Selangor's revenue is less than its budget. It does not make economic sense. Where do you get the money?" he asked.

Anwar started his 90-minute speech at 11.30am without the presence of any senior minister in the House and resumed for another 20 minutes after lunch break.

'No focus on just distribution'

In his speech, Anwar hit out at the budget for its over-emphasis on growth figures.

"The focus should not be merely on growth figures and the size of the economy. Household income is crucial because it is the measurement that determines whether economic growth is justly benefitted by all sectors of society," he said.

To prove his point, Anwar highlighted the Household Income and Basic Needs Survey 2009 released by the Department of Statistics, which found that the 20 percent richest segment in Malaysia controls 50 percent of economic wealth.

"At the same time, the poorest 40 percent only shares 14 percent of the economic cake," he said.

He also sought to position Pakatan's alternative budget apart from the government's budget, touting the opposition coalition's plan to increase household income to ensure that people were truly benefitting from economic progress.

"Pakatan from the start has emphasised that national economic planning must shift from chasing equity and growth targets to the target for household income to have a minimum of RM4,000 within the first term of a Pakatan government," he said.

Anwar added while Pakatan had no problems with the one-off assistance given to the people such as the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M), it does not fundamentally solve the problem of rising cost of living.

"This creates a culture of dependency, concrete steps should be taken to allow people to move out of poverty altogether," he said.

He also hit out at the government for various tax break and perks given to corporations including the oil and gas sector but moved to slash subsidy for the common people.

"The prime minister only dares to stand up to the rakyat (to cut subsidy) but he does not dare to say not to big taukes (prominent figures)," he said.

Taking a page out of the premier's book during the budget speech, Anwar too, concluded his speech with a quote from Plato on justice.

"Justice implies superior character and intelligence while injustice means deficiency in both respects. Therefore judge men are superior in character and intelligence and more effective in action. Injustice implies ignorance, stupidity, and badness," he said.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/210413>