

Shahidan: Anwar agrees to pay hike for MPs
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Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim has revealed that opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has agreed to a pay hike for MPs.

Speaking to Malaysiakini this evening, he also clarified that he was not threatening the opposition over this matter.

"I did not threaten the opposition, all the parties had agreed over this issue. The opposition leader had agreed over the pay changes.

"I did not threaten any parties but I was just giving the consensus in a good way," he said.

During a press conference earlier, he said if there is opposition to the move, then the pay hike would be scrapped.

"If there is opposition, then there will be no change. Forget about it.

"We are doing this based on needs. We would like the change, if possible. If not, then never mind, we are used to sacrifices," he added.

Shahidan was referring to the opposition stance against the last attempt to hike MPs' allowance in 2012.

However, the minister said, following discussions with opposition MPs, he found out that they weren't really opposed to a pay increase but wanted it to be channelled to allowances for research officers to assist them during parliamentary debates.

He said the bi-partisan parliamentary committee has already agreed on the allowance hike and submitted the proposal to the cabinet.

"The opposition leader also has no problem. Other MPs have also agreed to it, in principle.

"But if they disagree, then there is no need for it (pay hike)," he said.

Prefers the term 'pay change'

Shahidan, during the press conference, refused to use the word "pay hike", saying it is only intended to make the rakyat "angry" and instead chose the phrase "pay change".

Even with the adjustment, he said, most of the amount would still go back to constituents.

"I don't know about the opposition but we in BN rarely get to take back our allowances home. It always goes back to the rakyat," he said.

Shahidan declined to reveal the details or quantum of increase, stating that it is the prime minister's prerogative and is expected to be tabled in the current Parliament sitting.

However, he said Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has stressed that ministers and deputy ministers would not get any pay increase.

Yesterday, Shahidan confirmed for the first time that there would be a new bid to increase the allowances of MPs, according to Sin Chew Daily.

All parliamentarians are expected to get a pay hike next year, more than a decade after their last increment.

Najib told BN parliamentarians and senators yesterday that he has agreed in principle to increase their salaries and incentives.

Shahidan also noted that the incentives of Malaysian parliamentarians are lower than that in Uganda, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand.

In the 2012 Budget, Najib had proposed to review the salaries of MPs but it was opposed by Pakatan Rakyat.

Meanwhile, DAP MP Anthony Loke said Shahidan had informed him of the matter.

Loke said Pakatan has agreed in principle to the pay hike because their salary is currently lower than some senior civil servants.

Furthermore, he said, since the government does not allocate money for opposition constituencies, the increment would help the MPs run their service centres and hire assistants.