

**Azmin: State must tighten belt**  
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Selangor backbenchers club chairperson Azmin Ali today warned the state Pakatan Rakyat state government against repeating the BN federal government's mistakes in managing its finances.

azmin ali pc in parliament 020709 02He questioned the need for a RM186 million supplementary budget bill, just the seven months into 2010.

"I am concerned that if this practice continues, the state will end up with a deficit budget instead of a balance budget," he said when debating the state supplementary bill at the state assembly today.

Azmin said the main reason why the state had to set aside RM57 million for unexpected costs for 2010 is the lack of planning and control in spending.

"This spendthrift (boros) must be stopped immediately," he said.

Austerity drive a must

Azmin (PKR-Bukit Antarabangsa) also reprimanded the government for excessive spending on state functions, to the point that up to RM500,000 would be spent on a single official ceremony.

"This happened because the departments involved are not consulted first before it is raised at the state cabinet meeting.

"Spendthrift and wasteful practices like this must be stopped immediately to save on the state government's unexpected expenditure," he said.

Azmin also sought clarification from the government on its alleged slant towards hiring event management consultants instead of relying on the services of local councils and district offices to host state events.

"I want to know who are these private companies appointed to handled state events and how much has been paid to each company," he said.

On the state government's reserves, Azmin stressed that austerity measures must be put in place to make sure Selangor is prepared to face the possibility of a double-dip recession.

Expect double-dip recession

He expressed concern that state reserves have gone slightly below the RM800 million mark, while permanent assets are currently valued at RM700 million.

Azmin suggested that the state government consider subscribing to the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) method in a bid to bump up returns from government assets such as its buildings.

"The REIT method is being studied by PKNS and the state government can contribute in this effort and look into the necessity for statutory bodies like PKNS and state-owned companies

to take this opportunity.

"The economic slowdown faced by Europe and the United States demands that the state government be prepared with a fiscal and financial development plan to make sure the rakyat are ready to face such a possibility.

"The state government needs to be ready to face a possible double-dip recession by stopping poor spending habits and strengthening its savings," he said.

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