

Anwar: Fundamental flaws remain
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The Budget 2009 unveiled by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today has failed to address 'fundamental flaws', according to new Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

budget 2009 290808 06 "There are some sweeteners here and there but it fails to address some fundamental flaws in the economic policy, issues of efficiency, governance and endemic corruption," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby after the PM's budget speech this afternoon.

He said these sweeteners do not commensurate with the vast increases in inflation and living cost. Hence, he added, the largely disappointing budget will not alleviate the problems and suffering of the poor.

The Budget 2009 was the first time for Anwar - who was newly sworn in as the Permatang Pauh MP yesterday - to be present in the House since 1997.

In 1997, Anwar who was then the deputy premier tabled Budget 1998 in his capacity as the finance minister. He was sacked from government the following year after an acrimonious fallout with then premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

'We're stuck in the old policy'

Elaborating on the Budget 2009, Anwar said the issue of competitiveness was not addressed.

"We continue to be in a state of denial. We are not able to shift from the obsolete economic policy, the rampant corruption and the failure to become more competitive because we are stuck in old policies.

"I see no way how we can attract foreign investment. Without foreign investment, Malaysia can't propel its economy and unfortunately this is not addressed," he said.

budget 2009 290808 04 Other than foreign investment, Anwar also regretted that the "endemic corruption, the tenders awarded to cronies and their families, failure to cut cost and be more efficient" were not addressed.

He explained that it was an 'exceptional case' for Malaysia to continue to record an expansionary and deficit budget since the country is an oil producing country.

"Malaysia is the only country that continues to register a major deficit. It is understandable for a country that does not have resources (but we are not)," he said.

Meanwhile, Anwar rebutted Abdullah's criticism towards the end of his speech where the premier hit out at the opposition for trying to seize power through "illegitimate means."

The PKR supremo has consistently claimed that the opposition alliance Pakatan Rakyat which he leads will obtain an extra 30 seats through defections from BN MPs - and then take

over the federal government.

Anwar said the premier made these remarks because he was worried about the possible crossovers.

"They still have the audacity to talk about democracy and to preach about democratic process. Mind you, democracy means in terms of governance, an independent judiciary and free media which they don't have.

"To my mind, it is really disappointing they have not seen the demand and the vast calls for reforms," stressed the opposition leader.

What other Pakatan leaders say

Lim Guan Eng (DAP-Bagan), Penang chief minister:

debat of land scandal 200808 lim guan ying pc(Our hope for a) RM200 million soft loan for heritage conservation has not been met. Instead, there is a RM15 million allocation for both Malacca and Georgetown. It's a good start but I think it is still insufficient. Heritage conservation is quite an expensive business, it's national pride. The Penang state government feels that much more resources should be put into this.

We are also disappointed there is nothing about the Mengkuang dam (in Penang) being mentioned. This is very critical for Penang's water needs. We were hoping that (Abdullah) will announce the construction of the RM1 billion dam so that we can ensure Penang's water supply, otherwise we may have critical water shortages in 2012.

In that respect, we are disappointed that Penang has not been given its due attention. We will continue to be hopeful and continue to ask the prime minister to reconsider.

Kamaruddin Jaffar (PAS-Tumpat), PAS secretary-general:

kamaruddin jaafar 00The high deficit this time shows inefficiency in the government system. We are also surprised that the premier did not take the opportunity to announce anything about petroleum prices because if his idea is to counter inflation, the fastest and most effective means would be to cut back petrol prices at the kiosk level - but they have not chosen to do that today.

The pump priming of mega projects were still announced. We are concerned with that as we believe most of them have been awarded through direct negotiations and therefore yet again, inefficiency creeps in. The public is not getting their money's value.

This is a post-Permatang Pauh (by-election) budget.

Liew Chin Tong (DAP-Bukit Bendera), DAP strategist:

liew chin tongThis is the biggest ever budget. Anwar's last budget, Budget 1998 was only RM68 billion. Budget 2009 costing RM207 billion is a huge jump from last year.

This is an election budget at the wrong time. However, we can see the prime minister has

taken a cue from Pakatan, such as the electricity fee waiver which is similar to the water tariff waiver implemented by the (Pakatan-led) Selangor state government.

However it is a good thing - a learning process for (the BN-controlled) government and now there is competition for better policies.

Another interesting thing to note is the development allocation for the Prime Minister's Department has increased tremendously from RM3.6 billion last year to RM10.22 billion this year. This is a fund to buy over the MPs and to do politically linked works.

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