

Anwar comes under fire from Najib
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Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Najib Abdul Razak today used the winding-up debate on the Budget 2009 Bill to repeatedly attack the credibility of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Najib - who has been a frequent target of Anwar's attacks over the past two years - fired his first salvo by attacking the opposition's alternative budget.

He said the alternative budget was contractive in nature since it had called on the government to reduce spending by RM24 billion.

"This is a suggestion that would destroy the economy, similar to what was suggested in 1997 by the then finance minister (Anwar)," he added.

Instead, he said the government had announced an expansionary budget that would spur growth at a time of global economic slowdown.

Chopper and bank deals

Najib also took Anwar to task for criticising government-linked Maybank Bhd's purchase of a 35 percent stake in Bank Internasional Indonesia (BII) costing RM4.26 billion.

"Let me make this clear. Allegations that (Maybank's) decision involved the Finance Ministry was not true. This is a commercial transaction and the bank's directions and investments are determined by the Maybank board of directors and shareholders," he said.

Anwar had previously claimed that Najib as finance minister had on Sept 30 knowingly approved the purchase of overpriced BII shares.

Meanwhile, Najib also responded to Anwar's allegation that the Defence Ministry had intended to purchase 12 Eurocopter helicopters in a dubious manner when the former was defence minister.

In the text of his speech, the deputy premier defended the deal as an international tender was implemented and a detailed evaluation of the helicopters was performed by the technical and pricing committee recognised by the Defence Ministry's acquisition board before the matter was forwarded to the Finance Ministry.

He added that the valuations were performed based on tender documents and the deal had been cleared of any wrongdoings by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

"This means that questions about a scandal which is harped upon by the opposition completely does not arise," he stressed.

However, the deputy premier did not mention the two deals when reading out his speech in the Dewan Rakyat.

Anwar caused instability

In his closing statement, Najib took a shot at Anwar again and blamed him for causing economic problems for the country by trying to topple the government through defections.

He said the opposition's plans to topple the government on Sept 16 caused instability and scared off investors.

Najib also took a swipe at the opposition leader's five-hour marathon speech in reply to the Budget 2009 Bill.

"This is something which is extraordinary when compared to the one and a half hours taken to table the Budget 2009 speech by the prime minister on Aug 29," he said.

Najib said Budget 2009 was driven by a caring government which would look after the well being of all communities.

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