

## **Replace Your Priorities In The Budget Or You Will Soon Be Replaced!**

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**By Teo Nie Ching**

Najib Razak took two hours to deliver his Budget speech in Parliament yesterday - his longest speech ever since he was appointed as the PM of Malaysia. As expected, the goodies and sweeteners made the headlines in all the mainstream media but beneath the surface, the real extent of the Government's practice of cronyism and misplaced priorities is revealed.

In the 2011 Budget tabled in October 2010, Najib announced a five-year freeze on toll rates on four highways owned by PLUS Expressways and in January this year, Najib again told us that several toll operations have been restructured following a review of transportation costs aimed at easing the people's burden.

But the truth is, the compensation paid out to toll concessionaires has increased from RM200 million in 2011 to RM343 million, amounting to an increase of 71.5%! Therefore Najib's so-called grand transformation and restructuring plan is nothing but a scam as the Government is simply passing on the financial burden of motorists to all taxpayers in Malaysia.

In Budget 2012, Najib also announced that all primary and secondary school fees will be abolished, beginning with the 2012 school term and RM1 billion will be allocated for the betterment of school premises. But what he conveniently chose not to mention in his speech was that the Federal Government's total development expenditure for education and training has been reduced from RM12 billion (2010) to RM8.5 billion - slashed by nearly 30%. As a direct consequence, there is less allocation for building new schools.

According to the guidelines set out by the Department of Town and Country Planning, Peninsula Malaysia, in areas with a population of 7,500, a primary school should be built while a secondary school should be built in areas with a population of 15,000. In line with this ratio, we need 9 new secondary schools and 18 primary schools by the year 2015 in the areas that fall under the authority of Majlis Perbadanan Kajang.

That's not all, our country needs more special education institutions for disabled children. Currently there are 21 special education institutions for the disabled in Singapore but there are only 32 in Malaysia despite the fact that Malaysia is approximately 500 times larger than our southern neighbour.

I find it even more disturbing that the Federal Government's total development expenditure for defence has increased from RM2.6 billion to RM3.6 billion. Malaysia does not face any immediate threats to its national security. BN should review its priorities, failing which its position as the Government of Malaysia could soon be replaced.

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