

## **BN MPs defeat motion against PM, say debt not a problem**

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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2 — Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs beat off an Opposition motion today to dock one month's pay from Datuk Seri Najib Razak's salary over his management of the economy, and argued that the national debt of RM407 billion was necessary to counter the global financial crisis.

Government backbenchers also said that the country's inflation was under control when responding to Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) claims that the prime minister had failed to manage the economy.

"What is the problem if the debt is 51 per cent of GDP? In America and Europe, it is worse.

"What is important is the economy and public welfare. The debt is to boost the economy, not for jollyng here and there," said Pasir Salak MP Datuk Tajuddin Abdul Rahman.

His Umno colleague Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan also said that the Opposition "wants an economic slump" to happen as was the case when Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was finance minister during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

"Remember when Permatang Pauh was finance minister. He didn't want to spend and it resulted in an economic slump," the Kota Belud MP said.

Jasin MP Datuk Ahmad Hamzah also argued that inflation in Malaysia is much lower than other parts of the world despite the consumer price index persisting at over three per cent since March, a two-year high.

PKR vice president Chua Tian Chang tabled a motion this morning to approve the government's 2012 Budget with an additional provision to dock a month's wages from Najib's salary.

When tabling the motion today, he cited reasons such as the increase in national debt to over 51 per cent of GDP; the deaths of former DAP aide Teoh Beng Hock and Customs officer Ahmad Sarbaini Mohamed while in Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission custody; and the clampdown on the July 9 Bersih rally for electoral reforms.

"The drop in various socioeconomic indicators shows the weakness in the administration of the Prime Minister's Office in addressing these issues," the Batu MP said.

He told The Malaysian Insider later that Pemandu Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jala's warning that Malaysia could still go bankrupt "is exactly the reason why I brought this motion."

DAP's Jelutong MP Jeff Ooi, who was the only other Opposition MP allowed to debate the motion, also accused Najib of flip-flopping on his promises to liberalise the economy.

Putrajaya was forced earlier this year to ease pre-qualification criteria for the MRT project to allow joint ventures, and set aside 43 per cent, or RM8 billion worth, of civil engineering work for the first MRT line for Bumiputera contractors despite analysts saying such a quota

may swell the cost of the project.

The government has also made several other concessions to Malay hardliners including blocking the sale of prime land worth billions of ringgit by UDA Holdings due to buyers not being "Bumiputera enough."

BN defeated the motion after Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia called for a voice vote.

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