

Raise income of poorest, Pakatan tells BN
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By Shannon Teoh

PETALING JAYA, Aug 23 — The federal opposition has mocked Putrajaya for “copying” its agenda to help families earning RM3,000 or less per month but said that the solution would not be to reduce cost of living but to raise their earning power.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) said in a joint press conference today that Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Husni Hanadzlah’s announcement yesterday that Pemandu will come up with measures in a fortnight to ease the pressure of inflation on individuals earning RM3,000 per month or less would only result in “mere tweaking” of the 2012 Budget.

“When it comes to individuals, that will be about 80 per cent of the workforce. Pemandu’s two-week timeframe will result in tweaking, not a new policy framework,” said PAS central committee member Dzulkefly Ahmad

The Kuala Selangor MP insisted however that this was an insufficient response to PR’s announcement on August 12 that its alternative budget would focus on breaking up existing monopolies to help lower prices for the benefit of the 60 per cent of households living on RM3,000 and below per month.

“We welcome our new role as adviser to the prime minister and finance minister,” DAP international secretary Liew Chin Tong said, adding that “the government doesn’t understand the real issues.”

He said for the country to achieve Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s own vision of a high-income economy by 2020, disposable income had to be raised as “domestic consumption forms an important pillar of our economy.”

“They see (low-income workers) as a problem, we see it as a catalyst for next growth as the bottom 60 per cent will spend locally,” the Bukit Bendera MP said.

PKR vice-president Chua Tian Chang said that under PR’s alternative budget, earning power would be raised by increasing productivity of the working population.

“The answer is not band-aids to plug in holes by throwing up food stamps or spending vouchers. Our strategy is to take away monopolies,” the Batu MP said.

PR has accused the Najib administration of supporting cartels including the recent share swap between Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia which it said will lead to higher fares for passengers.

At the end of July, opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim also vowed to issue individual licences to taxi drivers.

Dzulkefly said today that the move would eliminate RM1,500 per month paid to “rent the licences” from taxi companies.

Prime Minister Najib has repeatedly promised that Budget 2012, to be unveiled in October,

will tackle rising cost of living as he heads into the final 18 months of his mandate.

He is expected to call a general election within the year but hopes of reclaiming BN's two-thirds majority of Parliament appear to be dimming as inflation has persisted at over 3 per cent, a two-year high, since March.

Last year's economic rebound, where the GDP jumped by 7.2 per cent, reversing 2009's 1.7 per cent contraction, has also failed to maintain its momentum as the first two quarters saw Malaysia register 4.9 and 4 per cent growth respectively.

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