

BN MPs get extra funds as snap polls loom
The Malaysian Insider
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 — Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmakers will get special cash allocations from Putrajaya to upgrade infrastructure and engage constituents through programmes and welfare aid ahead of anticipated snap polls within a year.

The Chinese-language newspaper, Sin Chew Daily, reported that the funds can run as high as RM2.5 million for certain constituencies, but no special allocations would be made for “black” areas, where BN lost both state and federal seats in the historic Election 2008 that saw the ruling coalition ceding the two-thirds parliamentary majority that allows them to approve laws on their own.

Several BN MPs contacted by The Malaysian Insider last night confirmed they will receive between RM500,000 to RM2.5 million in what is seen as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s desire to regain a powerful parliamentary majority.

A BN lawmaker said some of the allocations have already been doled out before last week’s Hari Raya holidays, with the rest in stages before 2011 lapses.

The Malaysian Insider understands that MPs who were allocated RM2 million have received RM400,000 before the Hari Raya break. Those who were allocated RM1 million have already received RM250,000.

“Areas that BN lost in the last general election were allocated RM500,000. BN held a special briefing mid-last month about the allocation of funds,” said another representative.

“However, if there are more than 60,000 voters in a BN constituency, for example, the representative would be paid more than RM2 million.

This was what was promised, or maybe RM2.5 million,” added the lawmaker.

When contacted, Kinabatangan MP Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin, however, denied that there were such allocations.

Sin Chew Daily reported last night that BN has classified constituencies as “black”, “grey” and “white” areas. “Grey” areas — where BN and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) both hold seats or where BN won marginally — will receive between RM1 million and RM2 million.

Allocations will be distributed accordingly to MPs in “white” areas where BN holds federal and state seats.

The Malaysian Insider reported last July that BN lawmakers have told coalition leaders that the government must ensure more funds trickle down to their constituencies — instead of concentrating on big-ticket projects like the Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) — if the ruling coalition wanted to receive a strong mandate in the next general election.

While the BN representatives said they understood the purpose of the multi-billion ringgit

MRT, some of them felt that development projects within "rural" constituencies should be prioritised.

It was understood that some BN leaders had requested an extra RM1 million in allocation of funds, on top of the usual annual allocation of an estimated RM1 million.

Sin Chew Daily also reported that BN representatives in Selangor received federal funds in August.

The Selangor PR government allocated RM1 million to each of its assemblymen last January for constituency projects, but excluded BN representatives.

PR has tenuous control over the country's most developed state, holding 36 seats in the 56-seat state assembly and 17 out of 22 parliamentary seats.

A seven-seat swing — elections speculated within months — will allow the federal ruling pact to recapture Selangor with a simple majority.

Najib had announced a RM1.4 billion welfare allocation to some half a million underprivileged recipients including senior citizens, the disabled, and widows of army and police personnel last month.

The Najib administration also paid a half-month bonus to 1.3 million civil servants and RM500 to 600,000 government pensioners before Hari Raya amid public concern over rising inflation.

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