

**PR: Minimum wage and removal of monopolies are priority**  
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PETALING JAYA (Aug 19, 2011): The introduction of minimum wages and removal of monopolies on commodities such as rice and sugar are among the top priorities of the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition's alternative budget for next year.

PKR strategy director Rafizi Ramli said the coalition will propose a minimum wage, across the board, for all industries as opposed to the Bersian Nasional's (BN) proposal of minimum wages according to sectors.

Batu MP Tian Chua said the coalition will also propose a series of policies to help industries to cope with the rise of labour costs.

"Maybe we will propose tax relief for them to improve labour productivity and a better use of our current training funds," he said.

"These will relieve some of the fears of employers," he added.

He also said monopolies of certain industries impede labour productivity and burden consumers.

One such monopoly is Bernas, a company that controls rice distribution in the country and receives subsidies from the government, Chua said.

"We propose that Bernas' monopoly should be ended and the importing license of rice be opened to several players so that there is competition," he said, adding this will help farmers to fetch better prices for their yields.

Chua said due to the monopoly where Bernas controls the distribution and selling of rice, smallholders are at the losing end because they cannot compete with the company.

He also said a policy to ensure efficient distribution of agriculture subsidies directly to farmers needs to be drafted.

Kuala Selangor MP Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the coalition's alternative budget committee said the minimum wage must hinge upon increasing productivity of workers whereby they are able to improve their skills.

Democratic Action Party (DAP) International Secretary Liew Chin Tong said the allocation to the Prime Minister's Department (PMD), which was RM15.86 billion for this year, needs to be reduced.

"In 2009, the PMD was allocated RM14 billion and in 2010 it was RM12 billion," he said adding the PMD only received RM4 billion in 2005.

Liew said: "We will allocate less than RM6 billion for the PMD in our alternative budget in order to use more of the national budget for pressing issues."

The PR will unveil its alternative budget for 2012 one week before the Federal Government

presents its budget on Oct 7.

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