

PKR to study inflation effects on the young
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 27 — PKR Youth will conduct a nationwide survey this weekend to study the effects of inflation on young voters, aiming to prove through statistics how badly the country's economy is affecting the group.

PKR Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Md Akin told a press conference here that the results of the survey will be presented to the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leadership to be incorporated in the pact's alternative Budget 2012.

PR is expected to complete its alternative budget by October 4 while Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will table Budget 2012 in Parliament three days later.

Shamsul Iskandar said the wing will deploy a team of volunteers to poll some 1,000 respondents aged between 18 and 35 years at densely populated areas like LRT stops and bus stations this Saturday and Sunday.

"The youth will play the most important role in deciding on the next government in the coming election.

"We want to prove through statistics and facts that these economic issues are real... we want to show that our alternative budget will touch on these issues," he said.

He added that the results of the survey would also be presented for discussion at forums.

Among others, the survey will question respondents on their views regarding the job market and employment opportunities, their financial burdens like having to repay student loans while struggling with a low entry-level income, prices of housing and cars and general living costs.

PKR chief strategist Rafizi Ramli said the group most affected by the country's surging inflation is the youth as they have to struggle with debt burdens while earning meagre salaries.

"Our salaries have not gone up but inflation has. Many youths have to tackle housing loans, car loans and education loans at the same time while they are only earning entry-level salaries," he said.

He added that there were insufficient avenues for youths to air their grievances over living costs and PKR hoped its survey would provide the group an opportunity to do so.

"Many of these are issues in the blindspot area that the older generation leadership has failed to see. We want to bring them to the forefront," he said.

Malaysia's inflation rate rose to a 27-month high of 3.5 per cent in June, driven by higher food and transport prices.

The government cut back on food and fuel subsidies in recent months in a bid to trim its

ballooning budget deficit, which was 5.6 per cent of GDP last year.

As public dissent grew over the surge in living costs, Najib recently announced a new NKRA (National Key Result Areas), promising to tackle the rising cost of living.

“This involves our efforts to tackle the rising cost of living. When the first six NKRAAs were announced two years ago, they were based on a careful study of what the rakyat wants and what the government should do.

“But at that time, there was no global phenomenon involving rising food costs that has affected many countries. It has impacted Malaysian consumers so the government feels that this has become a key issue among the people and we need to respond in kind,” he had said.

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