

Pakatan budget can't rein in spending, says BN
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 4 — Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmakers are not convinced that Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) alternative budget will be able to cap national expenditure as they claim the opposition has failed to do so in the states which it governs.

Many BN leaders have also shrugged off PR's budget, saying that its contents were "populist" and merely aimed at garnering maximum voter support in the upcoming national polls.

Chua said it was easy for Pakatan to make populist promises. — File pic
Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had launched PR's alternative budget earlier today, stating that it would cap expenditure at RM220 billion, resulting in a deficit of 4.4 per cent.

PR believes it can increase government revenue by nine per cent to RM181 billion without introducing new taxes.

The federal opposition's alternative budget stated that RM15.5 billion can be raised through auctions of approved permits (APs), higher oil prices and reintroducing import tax on 200 luxury items that was lifted by BN last year.

PR also proposed Putrajaya sets aside RM22 billion for subsidies and another RM5.9 billion to raise the wages of 1.3 million civil servants, citing the rising cost of living.

"It's easy to make these populist promises without the responsibility of implementing it.

"The Auditor-General's Report highlights that Penang's expenditure rose from RM252.3 million in 2007 to RM299.2 million in 2009, up by 19 per cent in just two years. So why does Pakatan think it can keep expenditure at RM220 billion?" Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Chua Tee Yong told The Malaysian Insider.

BN has claimed that the PR state's current economic development should be attributed to the previous state government.

Chua charged that Penang's surplus budget had decreased since 2008, and that it was projecting a substantial deficit.

"Penang's finances get worse every year. From RM88 million surplus in 2008 to RM77 million, to RM33 million, and early this year they projected a RM108 million deficit. So they have not proven themselves at state level, let alone federal.

"Penang under BN recorded surpluses from 2004 to 2008, and in 2005 about RM80 million as well," said the Labis MP.

Chua also questioning PR's proposal for Putrajaya to set aside RM5.9 billion for civil servants, claiming it was a "desperate" reaction to reports that Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Najib Razak would announce a pay increase when he announces Budget 2012 on Friday.

"Pakatan Rakyat just wants to take the credit and accuse us of copying them. But you can't just pluck RM6 billion in three days out of nowhere. It doesn't work that way," he said.

Abdul Rahman wanted to know how exactly PR would cut the Prime Minister's Department's allocation by RM10 billion.

Umno Kota Belud MP Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan went a little further and dubbed PR's alternative budget as nothing more than a "revamped" version of its Buku Jingga manifesto.

"It's Buku Jingga 2.0, bigger and badder."

Abdul Rahman demanded PR explain how exactly it would cut the Prime Minister's Department's allocation by RM10 billion.

"Anwar wants to cut RM10 billion from JPM's (PM's Department) budget. But then, will give it to other ministries to spend? How will that reduce the deficit?"

"It's irresponsible. Some departments need the money. If there is a natural disaster, the money in PM's Department is usually used to help victims... so if you take that away, what happens? Which part of the department's finances you want to trim?" said the Umno leader.

Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Abdul Latif Ahmad felt PR's budget was "very populist", saying it was specifically focusing on wooing the civil service.

"They know where to focus on, the civil service vote bank, usually a fixed deposit for the government.

"But the truth is expenditure, expenses are increasing. It's a fact. How do you cap it by such a huge amount? It is not realistic. They haven't seen things on a federal level, they don't know," the Mersing MP said.

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