

Pakatan: Welfare grant proposal not election candy
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SHAH ALAM, Oct 6 — The federal opposition has denied shopping for votes by promising RM5.9 billion in salary increases to civil servants in its alternative Budget announced this week.

PKR strategic director Rafizi Ramli said Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) proposed wage hike should be seen as an investment in the underperforming civil service and not Barisan Nasional-style (BN) vote buying.

"Pakatan Rakyat sees it from a policy framework (point of view)," he told a 150-strong crowd at the PR Alternative Budget Forum here last night.

"We'll give an extra RM500 every month to teachers not as 'candy' but because that's one way to upgrade the education sector. It's very different."

Rafizi (picture) explained that part of the civil service pay package would go towards fulfilling PR's minimum wage promise for some 300,000 government staff earning under RM1,100 per month currently.

Civil servants in higher wage brackets would also have their pay adjusted accordingly once minimum wage is introduced.

He said that once the wage hike was instituted and civil servants were given responsibilities in line with their status, they would be more motivated to carry out their duties efficiently.

PR believes it can cap government expenditure at RM220 billion and boost earnings by nine per cent to RM181 billion without new taxes, resulting in a 4.4 per cent deficit.

The alternative budget expects to raise RM15.5 billion through auctions of approved permits (APs), higher oil prices and by reintroducing import tax on 200 luxury items that was lifted by BN last year.

The opposition coalition has also proposed that Putrajaya set aside RM22 billion for subsidies and another RM5.9 billion to raise the wages of 1.3 million civil servants, citing rising cost of living.

But BN lawmakers are not convinced PR can cap national expenditure, claiming the opposition has failed to do so in states it controls.

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