

Show us the highways, DAP asks PM
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 13 — DAP today accused Datuk Seri Najib Razak of “plucking projects out of thin air” to impress voters, pointing out that not one of the six highway projects announced in Budget 2011 last year had taken off.

The party’s publicity chief Tony Pua told reporters that with five new highway projects announced in last week’s Budget 2012, “it shows the prime minister is plucking these projects out of thin air”.

“It is ridiculous and shows he is not treating the budget seriously,” the Petaling Jaya Utara MP said. “Datuk Seri Najib Razak must explain if these ‘high-impact’ projects are just part of a ‘wish list to impress’.”

The Prime Minister’s Department had replied to Pua’s question in Parliament earlier this week that of the six highways announced last year, “some have received in-principle approval from the Cabinet while others are still being studied”.

The government said in its written reply that cost, toll rates, concession period or time span of construction “have not been finalised as it is still being studied”.

It explained that for private and public-private-partnership projects, Cabinet in-principle approval was only the third phase of a seven-step process before a deal was signed and a project was started.

The highways announced last year are the Ampang Elevated Highway (Pandas-Cheras), Guthrie-Damansara Highway, Damasara-Petaling Jaya Highway, West Coast Highway (Banting-Taiping), Sungai Dua-Jurur Highway and Senawang-KLIA Highway.

The West Coast Highway was once again cited in last week’s Budget, with the East Coast Jabor-Kuala Terengganu Highway, Segamat-Tangkak Highway, Central Spine Highway and Kota Marudu-Ranau Road added to the list.

“It appears that the announcement has no tangible substance because the likelihood is . . . the highway projects announced in the current budget will not see the light of day,” Pua said.

Najib’s RM230 billion Budget 2012 is said to be an election budget, with RM4.5 billion set aside to hand cash to the poor, students and the 1.3 million civil servants under the Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

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