

Bonuses won't solve country's financial woes, Anwar tells Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 22 — The Najib administration should stop corruption and cut unnecessary spending first, instead of paying bonuses to civil servants in Budget 2012, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

The Pakatan Rakyat (PR) defacto leader said leakages were a serious problem with Putrajaya failing to meet the challenge.

"They have failed to address the issues of governance and have not given these things top priority...if we give one or two million here and there, it does not lessen the burden and tanggungan (responsibilities) of the government," Anwar (picture) told reporters today.

He said that PR's alternative budget would address ways in which the government should tackle corruption and leakages.

"In the time I was finance minister I have never denied that it is important to recognise workers and to give bonus. But the people should not be taken by RM600 when people are stealing from you RM600 million.

"Our approach is to stop waste as this would (only) increase the needs for such bonuses... we will table it before the national budget," added Anwar.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is considering a hefty bonus or a pay increase for all 1.3 million civil servants in Budget 2012, in what is seen as an attempt to counter rising costs and keep their support ahead of the next general election expected within a year.

The Malaysian Insider understands the prime minister has asked the Finance Ministry to work out the cost of either option. The move is similar to former Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's move in 2007, a year before calling polls.

Najib is also the finance minister and is due to table the Budget 2012 proposals on October 7.

The source pointed out that the Najib administration had paid out a half-month bonus to all 1.3 million civil servants and RM500 to 600,000 government pensioners ahead of Hari Raya last month amid public concern over rising inflation. The payout cost Putrajaya RM2 billion although the government usually gives a one-month bonus at the end of the year.

The civil service has always been seen as a bedrock of support for Najib's ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. However, his predecessor Abdullah's administration, lost badly in Election 2008 despite winning an overwhelming 91 per cent of Parliament four years earlier. Critics and analysts argued then that a combination of rising inflation and a push for civil liberties cut BN's support in the polls.

Najib is determined to turn around the coalition's fortunes and recently restarted his

reforms agenda by announcing the repeal and revision of several security and media laws last Thursday, including the replacement of the Internal Security Act (ISA) with two other security laws that focus on terrorism, race and religion issues.

Anwar said past national budget allocations have led to "high deficits" and warned that the government could not afford to abuse federal funds to enrich its Barisan Nasional cronies.

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