

**Najib says government can afford budget cash handouts**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**October 8, 2011**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUANG, Oct 8 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak today laughed off the opposition's description of Budget 2012 as "unrealistic", saying it is political suicide to table a budget he cannot implement.

The prime minister insisted the government can afford the cash assistance programmes promised in Budget 2012, including one-off RM500 payments to all households earning below RM3,000, RM100 to all primary and secondary school students and hikes in civil servant wages and pensions.

"We have (money). If we did not, I would not have tabled it (Budget 2012) yesterday.

"I would have been committing suicide politically if I tabled a budget the government cannot deliver on," he told a press conference after a meet-and-greet session with residents here at SJK (C) Kundang.

In his speech yesterday, Najib promised cash handouts, more money for civil servants, schools and a fund for "high-impact development" projects as part of his Budget 2012 measures to put cash in the pockets of voters ahead of a general election expected soon.

In response, Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim accused the government of copying the alternative budget proposed by his Pakatan Rakyat and making unrealistic projections for the next year in what is "clearly an election ploy."

"It is unrealistic. It is clearly an election ploy. In the last ten years, growth, deficit and foreign investment figures have always been proven to be wrong," the former deputy prime minister said.

He added that Najib had tabled a budget that "copied Pakatan Rakyat's but they cannot implement it."

But Najib scoffed at Anwar's remarks, saying it was merely the Permatang Pauh MP's "political answer".

He expressed interest in hearing Anwar's response once the federal government delivers on all its Budget 2012 promises.

"If he said it is unrealistic, that means we cannot fulfil our promises.

"So I would like to know what he would say once we do," he said.

Najib pointed out the budget was prepared by experts and officials from the Finance Ministry, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and Bank Negara and was based on realistic facts.

"So it is unlikely that they would not know what should be tabled, in terms of facts, for my

and my government's decisions," he said.

The prime minister said in his speech yesterday that the budget deficit is expected to fall to 4.7 per cent on the back of GDP growth of between 5 to 5.5 per cent.

But analysts have said that Putrajaya's projection for economic growth is too high, while the opposition has pencilled in just a 4 to 4.5 per cent growth in their alternative budget.

Najib also pledged wage increases for the civil service worth RM2 billion and a RM2.5 billion direct assistance package to poor households and students.

This assistance package will see the government hand out RM500 in cash to households with a monthly income of less than RM3,000, as well as a RM100 cash aid and RM200 in book vouchers for students.

The federal opposition had called for RM5.9 billion and RM6.9 billion to be set aside for civil service pay hikes and direct assistance respectively.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-says-government-can-afford-budget-cash-handouts/>