

In quest to regain Selangor, Najib uses Budget as soapbox
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA SELANGOR, Oct 9 — Two hours before Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim showed up in Ijok yesterday, Datuk Seri Najib Razak was already in the Selangor menteri besar's constituency, promising pay increases and clean water and electricity.

Just the day before, the prime minister has tabled a record RM230 billion budget.

Yesterday, Najib talked mostly in terms of hundreds and thousands of ringgit instead to voters who handed Malaysia's richest state to Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in 2008 on the back of rising costs and unhappiness over government wastage.

Najib told Ladang Tuan Mee estate workers in Ijok, where Khalid won by less than 2,000 votes in 2008, that they would see their pay rise by RM200 per month after "approaching every estate owner to increase their salaries."

To much applause, he reiterated his budget promises, telling those in estates that they will receive clean water and electricity.

From Ijok, to Rawang and then Gombak — all PR-held constituencies — he repeated the same script, touching on the RM500 payment to all households earning below RM3,000, RM100 to students and hikes in civil servant wages and pensions.

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim also visited his Ijok constituency yesterday. — Picture by Choo Choy May

Despite doubts over Budget 2012's growth and deficit forecasts, Najib is brandishing it to convince fence-sitters in semi-rural areas to swing back to the ruling coalition.

Khalid, on the other hand, arrived late to meet old folks from Ijok for the Jom Shopping programme which hands out RM100 shopping vouchers to those aged over 60.

According to the state government, some 170,000 senior citizens, which the menteri besar admitted "are our weak link," are registered under the programme.

Instead, he left his wife, Puan Sri Salbiah Tunut, at Tesco Kuala Selangor to mingle while he rushed off to Gombak, defending yet another seat from Najib's onslaught.

The Bandar Tun Razak MP also said that senior citizens were less exposed to alternative news "because they stay isolated but now we have to open ourselves to them."

Najib has told Selangor BN that the state is a priority for an election expected soon and has promised to win it back "at any cost."

Taking back the state and BN's customary two-thirds majority in Parliament are said to be the only way for Najib to guarantee he remains in office.

His predecessor Tun Abdullah Badawi was forced out after the record election losses of March 2008, where BN also ceded five state governments

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