

Pakatan lauds withdrawal of MPs' pay hike plan
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders today applauded Putrajaya's decision to scrap the proposal to increase MPs' salaries, insisting the move was unsuitable due to the present economic climate.

PR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, however, acknowledged that the proposal was backed by numerous opposition lawmakers but said their suggestions had been rejected by the leadership.

Anwar said a pay increase for MPs would be inappropriate in the present economic situation.
— File pic

He noted that many junior MPs were struggling with their meagre salaries and allowances but insisted that in the present economic climate, it would have been inappropriate to raise their salaries.

"The government rejected our proposal for minimum wage... we wanted minimum wage.

"So I feel it would have been unreasonable to hike MPs' salaries, inappropriate in the present economic situation," he told reporters when met at the Parliament lobby here.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz announced earlier today his decision to withdraw the RM30 million allocated under Budget 2012 for the increase in MP salaries due to objection raised by several opposition lawmakers.

Anwar also noted that the rationale behind the pay hike was to help MPs pay the salaries of their research assistants, service centres and constituency work but claimed the proposal to increase their salaries did not specifically state this.

"If it is money you are adding to appoint new staff or research assistants or for constituency work, that was not proposed. What was proposed was a substantial increase in the allowance, plus other perks," he said.

Anwar reminded PR MPs of the hardship faced by the poor, insisting that the lawmakers were still better off than this group.

"I'm not saying they (junior MPs) are comfortable now but I am saying how do you rationalise when some people are facing similar or worse hardship?

"I am not saying we should not consider but how could we do it at this time?" he said.

PKR deputy president Azmin Ali concurred, claiming that many PR representatives were in agreement.

He said with the surge in living costs and inflation, it was important for lawmakers to concentrate on helping the poor instead of calling for their salaries to be reviewed.

Nazri said a review could still be done in the future.

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