

**DPM dismisses 'election budget' charge**  
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**By Lisa J. Ariffin**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 — The deputy prime minister today dismissed the opposition accusation that the government's budget announcement today is an election ploy.

"If there are parties who call this an election budget, then it's their problem," Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (picture) told reporters today following the presentation of Budget 2012.

"I don't think this issue is the main concern, because the current situation in the country requires a caring government that listens to the people's needs," he added.

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

Asked to comment on the opposition's alternative budget, Muhyiddin said PR had just realised the needs of the country whereas ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) has been doing it for 54 years.

"BN has always put people first. Although we have never said so, all this while, we have been people-centric in line with PM's concept of 1 Malaysia and 'people first'," he said.

"The opposition, after 54 years they say they want a welfare country. BN has been doing it all along. PR just realised. Just now in Parliament, they brought out their orange book and what not... But the people know," he added.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today 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.

The 2012 Budget funds for subsidies totalled RM33.2 billion for 2012.

The government revised its 2011 economic growth target to 5.0-5.5 per cent from 5.0-6.0 per cent earlier. It estimated that the fiscal deficit will shrink further to 4.7 per cent of gross domestic product next year from 5.4 per cent in 2011 as it reduces development spending.

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

Najib 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 also 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.

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