

**Pakatan states up the ante in Aidilfitri bonuses**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**July 26, 2012**  
**By Hafidz Baharom**

KUALA LUMPUR, July 26 — The Selangor and Penang Pakatan Rakyat (PR) governments today announced Aidilfitri bonuses for state civil servants, raising the stakes in the coalition's battle with Barisan Nasional (BN) for voter support a day after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced similar payouts for federal employees.

In George Town, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng announced today a half-month bonus with a minimum payment of RM600 to the 3,780 members of the state civil service.

He also announced a payment of RM300 for 10 supervisors and 1,391 unskilled labourers. Penang's bonus payments will cost taxpayers RM3.9 million.

In Selangor, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim said his government would also pay a half-month bonus with a minimum payment of RM500 to all state civil servants.

An additional RM200 bonus will also be paid into the Selangorku Savings scheme for each civil servant. The extra RM200 will be deposited into Muslim civil servants' Tabung Haji accounts while non-Muslims would get their payouts in the form of Bank Simpanan Nasional certificates.

The Selangor bonuses will cost taxpayers RM20 million.

Yesterday, Najib announced a half-month bonus with a minimum payment of RM500 for civil servants and a special payment of RM500 for pensioners, all to be paid on August 9.

The bonus and special payment will cost an estimated RM2.2 billion and benefit 1.27 million civil servants as well as 657,000 government pensioners.

The Malaysian Insider reported last week that the Najib administration is looking at a snap election in September before Malaysia Day if it goes through with a plan to dissolve Parliament next month.

It is understood that Najib's aides and BN officials have briefed a number of people on the plan to hold elections between Hari Raya Aidilfitri, which falls on August 19, and the proposed Budget Day of September 28. Malaysia Day is on September 16.

Najib has been cagey about the election date although he expressed confidence in winning all state governments and the federal government. His BN controls Putrajaya and nine states while the opposition PR rules Kedah, Kelantan, Penang and Selangor. PR lost Perak in February 2009 when three lawmakers turned independent, which was enough for BN to recapture the state.

Najib, who is seeking his first mandate at the polls, has been touring the country with his "Jelajah Janji Ditepati" (Promises Fulfilled Tour) over the past few months and is due to visit Kelantan and Terengganu soon for the campaign. Ironically or coincidentally, "Janji Ditepati" (Promises Fulfilled) is also the theme for this year's National Day on August 31.

Nearly 13 million voters are eligible to cast their ballot if a general election is called involving all 222 federal seats and 505 seats in 12 states. However, the four PR-ruled states have yet to say if they will hold elections on the same day as the general election because their mandates only expire next April. Sarawak held its state election last year.

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