

Anwar: Audit report delayed to stifle opposition's Budget 2013 debate
Malaysian Insider
September 24, 2012
By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today questioned the government's motive in delaying its release of the Auditor-General's Report, asking if this was a deliberate attempt to prevent opposition lawmakers from referring to the document when debating Budget 2013.

The opposition leader said this was an "inappropriate" practice as the A-G's Report should be used as reference when parliamentarians review the government's expenditure plans for the following year.

"It seems like this is a tactic of the Umno-Barisan Nasional (BN) government to prevent MPs from viewing this report.

"The A-G's Report is an evaluation of the government's performance over the year. So in order to fairly debate the budget, we need to read this audit report first," Anwar (picture) pointed out.

The Permatang Pauh MP vowed that should Pakatan Rakyat (PR) take over the reins of Putrajaya after the coming polls, it would ensure that the A-G's Report is released to MPs before the budget is tabled.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz told reporters in Parliament this morning that the government had decided to delay its release of the A-G's Report, which had severely embarrassed the government last year when it revealed several financial irregularities in federal expenditure, including the use of a RM250 million loan for the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) cattle farming scheme.

The Padang Rengas MP said the public document would only be released in the House "one or two weeks" after Budget 2013 is tabled this Friday.

"The report is ready but it's not going to be tabled simultaneously (with Budget 2013) because the audit report may take more news than the budget.

"So what we will do is the audit report will be tabled a week or two later but there will still be enough time for the MPs to debate," he said.

PKR deputy president Azmin Ali accused the government of attempting to hide its weaknesses by delaying the report, pointing out that the audit was meant to reveal any irregularities in federal expenditure.

The Gombak MP agreed that tabling the document before the Budget would help parliamentarians better assess the government's plans for the country's finances in the year ahead.

"The government is trying to distract MPs from seeing the facts. This report is important; we do not want to debate with baseless allegations," he said.

The A-G's Report is traditionally tabled simultaneously with the Budget but the government had delayed it last year, despite protests from opposition lawmakers.

The 2010 A-G report released on October 24 last year found that nine federal ministries and departments had exceeded their overall operational allocation by a total of RM3.73 billion.

They include the Education Ministry, Health Ministry, Home Ministry, Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Ministry, Public Service Department, Attorney-General's Department, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and the Public Services Commission.

The report also stated that the overspending was unavoidable due to additional activities and unscheduled payments.

Hakcipta © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/anwar-audit-report-delayed-to-stifle-oppositions-budget-2013-debate/>