

Pakatan pitches homemakers' savings, childcare allowance to woo women
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 2 — Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail said today a Pakatan Rakyat (PR) government will introduce a savings scheme for homemakers and a childcare allowance for poor households as part of the opposition pact's pitch to win the crucial female votes ahead of elections expected soon.

The PKR president said the proposed Caruman Wanita Nasional would be a social safety net for women who are homemakers, and would cost taxpayers RM3 billion a year.

Under the proposed scheme, a PR government will provide a yearly payment of RM600 to homemakers, while ensuring the husband also contributes a sum ranging from RM120 to RM1,200 per year.

The scheme's target is to ensure that a homemaker will have at least savings of RM30,000 at age 50.

Wan Azizah said PR expects up to five million homemakers to benefit from such a scheme.

"This policy is not just based on compassionate grounds, but on real-life problems faced by homemakers. Homemakers tend to have little to no income, so they almost have no savings of their own.

"It is also designed to encourage personal savings, and it is part of our broader policy to increase disposable income of households," she said.

She added that the PR pact was proposing a childcare allowance designed for working women of poor households earning less than RM1,000 a month.

For every child below the age of 12, she said a PR government would provide a childcare support fund of RM1,000 a year per child.

According to PR's statistics, there are currently about 470,000 poor households that will qualify for childcare allowance.

With an average headcount of two children per household being below 12, this programme will cost taxpayers about RM940 million a year.

"This will go some way towards helping the working mother pay for a babysitter for her child whilst she works.

"This is not a handout policy but it is an economic instrument to enable more women to join the workforce," said Wan Azizah.

PR is ramping up efforts to win over women voters with the formation of an initiative called Agenda Wanita Malaysia (Malaysian Women's Agenda) that was launched last month.

This comes on the back of political observers and analysts saying that both the youth and women are the swing voters who will determine who takes Putrajaya as the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) and PR are locked in an almost even tussle for support.

As women make up half of the country's electorate, both coalitions will be in a keen tussle for the vote bank.

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