

Anwar: BN's budget handouts merely 'titbits' for the poor
Malaysian Insider
September 28, 2012
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 28 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today described Barisan Nasional's (BN) Budget 2013 handouts as mere "titbits" fed to the poor and middle income earners, pointing out that the move would do nothing to narrow the country's income gap.

The prime minister hopeful agreed that the fresh round of cash handouts in Budget 2013 to middle- and lower-income Malaysians was proof that the government was merely concerned with its chances at the ballot boxes in the coming months.

"The announcements of handouts to general Malaysians is just a small dosage for the elections... but the basic structural problem of the country, where the rich cronies and their family members amass millions of dollars of profits through improper means — that is left intact," Anwar said.

He pointed out that disbursing one-off cash aids to Malaysians but failing to address these allegedly "improper" amassing of wealth by government cronies would not help improve the livelihoods of the masses.

"That is our problem — because the profits amassed by the rich, in the billions, should be fairly distributed to those in the middle to lower income categories.

"Now, all you do is feed titbits to these groups but you do not touch the massive monopolies that have reaped billions from the country," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak unveiled earlier today a Budget 2013 filled with more goodies and cash handouts for Malaysians in a move that his political foes believe is tailored to bolster BN's chances at the ballot box when polls are held.

He promised a whopping RM3 billion in one-off payments to families earning below RM3,000 monthly under the second instalment of his highly-criticised Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (BR1M) and a 1.5-month bonus for the 1.4 million-strong civil service in what is seen as an election budget before polls that must be held by mid-2013.

The prime minister, who is also the finance minister, gave a RM250 handout to unmarried citizens above 21 years old and earning less than RM2,000 — the bulk of the three million new voters who will head to the ballot box in the next general election.

Schoolchildren will also get RM100 each from Putrajaya next year, while RM1.2 billion has been allocated for senior citizens, children, disabled workers and those with chronic illnesses under the 1 Malaysia Welfare Programme.

Najib also cut one percentage point in income tax for the first RM50,000 of chargeable income, providing minor relief to the 1.2 million taxpayers in a country of 28 million.

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