

**Ka Siong: Pakatan twisting nation's debt data to scare voters**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 20 — MCA Youth today blamed Pakatan Rakyat (PR) for the public's waning confidence in the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, accusing the opposition pact of manipulating Malaysia's debt statistics to convince citizens that the country was headed for bankruptcy.

MCA Youth chief Datuk Wee Ka Siong insisted that Malaysia was on the right track, pointing out that the country's budget deficit has been reducing gradually over the past decade, despite the image portrayed by PR.

Taking a swipe at the opposition, he said "people with economic and financial knowledge" would understand that if the budget deficit and the nation's debts are controlled within certain limits, Malaysia would not meet with economic disaster.

"People are beginning to feel less confident about their financial status... It does not help when rumours are spread about our country going bankrupt," he said during his opening address at the MCA Youth annual general meeting (AGM) this morning.

"It is undeniable that PR is responsible for spinning economic issues and manipulating certain statistics to scare the rakyat."

Defending the BN government's fiscal policies, Wee pointed out that Putrajaya has never resorted to borrowing in order to pay for the salaries of civil servants

The government, he added, only borrows for development purposes.

"People involved in business would know that borrowing moderately is the right strategy to expand effectively," he said.

Wee said that although national debt has reached 53 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), this was significantly below Japan's 211 per cent, Singapore at 118 per cent, Germany at 81 per cent and the United States at 67 per cent.

"These are the same countries which are greatly admired by PR leaders... if they say Malaysia is moving towards bankruptcy, then these model countries have long since been bankrupt," he said.

Wee also criticised PR's recently-released shadow budget, which also proposed a deficit of 3.5 per cent, and added that the pact's government in Selangor had similarly presented a budget where expenditure outstripped revenue.

"Why does PR always blame the BN government, and why do they keep quiet about what transpires in Selangor?" he asked.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak had offered a slew of goodies when announcing Budget 2013 last month, spending RM3 billion on cash handouts to families earning below RM3,000 monthly 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 and finance minister also gave a RM250 handout each to unmarried citizens above 21 years old and earning less than RM2,000 — the bulk of the three million new voters set to vote 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 by one percentage point income tax for those with taxable incomes of between RM2,500 and RM50,000, providing minor relief for some of the 1.2 million taxpayers in the country of 28 million.

But the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government cut sugar subsidy by 20 sen/kg, leaving the subsidy now at 34 sen/kg, bringing down the sugar subsidy bill to RM278 million at current prices.

The government will also spend RM1.9 billion to build 123,000 housing units for those earning between RM3,000 and RM5,000.

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