

Pakatan offers to top civil service pay, perks promised by PM
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By Jahabar Sadiq

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 — In an unprecedented move, PAS has moved to pre-empt a last minute campaign by Datuk Seri Najib Razak to woo civil servants by saying that Pakatan Rakyat (PR) would match and improve on any promise by the prime minister to raise salaries and allowances.

Najib is expected to announce several initiatives including a pay rise of up to 10 per cent, improved costs of living allowances and housing allowances for the 1.5 million-strong civil service today.

“The PAS central committee met and has taken the stand that any announcement made by the prime minister will be continued when Pakatan Rakyat runs Putrajaya,” PAS vice-president Datuk Husam Musa (picture) said in a statement carried by the party’s Harakah Daily Online.

He gave three initiatives to be carried out by PR, with the first one to improve on the goodies for the civil service, including promotion for all civil servants, including teachers, Customs officers, police, military and others.

“We will also follow what is done in Kelantan where all housing and vehicle loans for civil servants will not be charged any more with the current four per cent interest rate from the moment PR takes over Putrajaya,” Husam said, adding that there will be a review of existing loans to ensure the government can absorb the financial implications.

The third initiative was to review and increase the tax allowances for civil servants and Malaysians whose salaries are low, he added.

Husam noted the low tax allowances for those with wives and children have prevented civil servants and the public to have enough income in the face of high living costs.

Both coalitions are out to court the civil servants, who form a key demographic among the 13.3 million voters who are eligible to cast their ballots in this year’s general election.

PAS and its allies, the DAP and PKR, bloodied Barisan Nasional’s (BN) nose in Election 2008 by denying the ruling coalition a two-thirds parliamentary majority. The three parties won 82 parliamentary seats and four more states and later agreed to form PR.

The general election is due any time soon as BN has yet to dissolve Parliament by last Friday, exactly five years after the last general election although its mandate only expires on April 28.

Husam also said the PAS central committee discussed the need to review the 45 per cent penalty for taxpayers whose declared income tax differs from the assessment made by the Inland Revenue Department.

“That penalty is a burden to the taxpayer. The country’s tax collection goes up because of the 45 per cent penalty. It is expected that this year’s collection of taxes including penalties will be the highest ever collected.

"The increased collection because of mandatory penalties will further increase pressure on the people," he said.

Husam also said PAS will review the export duties for crude palm oil (CPO) of up to 23 per cent which has made Malaysian exports expensive in international markets while Indonesia has cut CPO duties twice to be more competitive.

He said the move would increase CPO prices and help smallholders in the country but Putrajaya's policy of giving approved permits (APs) to selected companies to export seven million tonnes of CPO without any duties has caused losses to the country.

Husam said PAS would push for a review of the system and would form a committee to formulate the party's stand on the tax penalties, CPO duties and eliminate the APs for CPO exports.

Malaysia is the world's second-largest producer of CPO after Indonesia with both countries competing for markets in the region, especially China and India.

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