

Warisan voices outrage over decoders for BR1M recipients

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Junz Wong questions move to offer free digital television decoders to 4.2 million BR1M recipients while health and other crucial ministry budgets have been cut.

PETALING JAYA: Warisan has joined the fray to attack the initiative to hand out free digital television decoders to 4.2 million BR1M recipients in phases until the end of the year.

The initiative – which has been criticised by opposition politicians as bait for the coming general election – was announced by Prime Minister Najib Razak last Tuesday.

Amanah deputy president Salahuddin Ayub, PKR vice-president Tian Chua and Amanah strategy director Dzulkefly Ahmad have accused Putrajaya of wasting public funds to further the Barisan Nasional's political interests.

Voicing his own outrage over the move, Warisan vice-president Junz Wong said while money was being “wasted” on these decoders, Sabah's nurses, teachers and police officers were suffering from budget cuts.

“A police officer here (Sabah) told me that he was personally asked to supply printing paper and computers because of the lack of funds to replace old worn down computers and paper.

“A lecturer from Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG) Kampus Keningau told me that the campus was to be closed and that lecturers had been asked to start dispersing in stages in July,” he told FMT, adding that teachers and nurses had also had their allowances cut.

The decoders, worth RM199 each, will provide access to nine terrestrial TV stations – TV1, TV2, TVi, TV AlHijrah, TV3, NTV7, 8TV, TV9 and Bernama News Channel – as well as four RTM radio stations.

Wong questioned how the Barisan Nasional (BN) government could spend that amount of money on its “campaigning” during an economic downturn.

“We need good economic policies rather than handouts of cash and TV decoders, while many important ministries, including the health and education ministry, have had their budgets cut.

“This is obviously vote fishing, but does it really work when everyone else is facing tough times making ends meet? I don't think so.”

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