

# Budget and audit report in focus

By RAM ANAND  
ramanand@gmail.com.my

THE Dewan Rakyat began its final meeting for the year yesterday, paving the way to dissolve the House if the general election is called by the end of the year.

However, there is less "election talk", and MPs from both sides of the divide are likely to spend the next couple of weeks debating the government's spending trends when Budget 2013 is tabled.

On Friday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will unveil the Budget,

which Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk S.K. Devamany has said would be "people-friendly".

Among the early hints dropped yesterday was that there would be a reduction in toll rates along the North-South Expressway.

However, there will likely be scrutiny on this year's Budget increase because the national debt is lingering dangerously close to 55 per cent of the national GDP ratio limit.

Pakatan Rakyat has drafted a shadow budget, expected to be unveiled before Najib's announcement on Friday.

The government has decided to delay the tabling of the Auditor-General's Report until at least one week after the Budget, giving the report undivided attention when it is tabled.

It was the 2010 AG's Report that led to the infamous National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) allegations that dominated news in the second half of 2011. The report is expected to be scrutinised again and used as a reference when debating the Budget.

The government has tabled almost all its promised reform Bills earlier this year, and with the elections around the cor-

ner, few Bills are expected to be introduced, this time around.

However, the housing and local government ministry will introduce a new Strata Management Bill 2012, touching on issues pertaining to the management of land titles.

Another Bill expected to draw attention is the International Transfer of Prisoners Bill 2012, to be tabled by the home affairs ministry.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said the Bill would help Malaysia deal with the many foreigners currently languishing in Malaysian prisons.

# Audit report to be tabled later

Govt does not want limelight to be taken away from Budget 2013

By **RAM ANAND**  
ramanand@mmmail.com.my

THE 2011 Auditor-General's Report is ready but will only be tabled at least a week after the 2013 Budget is unveiled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz said yesterday.

Nazri, who is in charge of parliamentary affairs, said the report, normally presented concurrently with the Budget, has been pushed back to prevent it from getting "more limelight" than

the Budget itself.

"Normally, we do it together but last year, we did it separately. This year, we will do the same," he said.

Nazri said there would still be enough time for the report to be debated in the House even though it would be tabled after the Budget.

"Maybe one or two weeks after the Budget. There will still be at least four weeks for the report to go through the committee stage, so there's ample time," he said.

The Budget will be unveiled by Najib on Friday and Nazri said the MPs would be given another week to debate and discuss the proposals before



**NAZRI: Says there will be ample time to debate AG's report**

moving on to the AG's report.

Nazri had earlier visited the reporters in Parliament

to check if they were satisfied with the new seating arrangements in the Parliament lobby, a place exclusively for reporters.

The journalists had, during the last Parliamentary meeting, complained to Nazri's aides about a lack of working space in the new Parliament lobby. There was no designated working space for journalists in Parliament lobby before this.

Nazri said both ends of the lobby would be for reporters and there would be more space with chairs and tables.

The new arrangement at the lobby can cater to at

least 50 reporters at any one time.

Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has criticised the government's decision to delay tabling of the AG's report.

He said the report should be tabled before the Budget and not the other way around.

"It would give MPs the opportunity to debate the Budget based on the auditor's report. Hence, the auditor's report must be given a priority," Anwar said.

He also said it was never a practice until last year to table an auditor's report after the Budget.