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Prisons Department needs 1,000 new staff

Ramlan Said; Lim Chee Wei

THE Prisons Department needs at least 1,000 more personnel to take over the running of four detention centres now under the Immigration Department.

Berita Harian, in a report yesterday, said the centres would be handed over to the Prisons Department early next year.

The department's deputy director-general, Donald Wee May Keun, said the centres are in Belantek, Kedah; Tanah Merah, Kelantan; Ajil, Terengganu; and Juru in Seberang Prai, Penang.

"The additional manpower is to ensure we have enough personnel to run the facilities once they are handed over," he said.

However, he did not say whether the department had put in a request to the Public Service Department for the new recruitment.

On another matter, Wee said the department was proud that the Anti-Corruption Agency had declared it (Prisons Department) as among the government agencies free from corruption.

In another story, the ACA announced investigations into the alleged excessive claims by 14 MPs would be completed by next month.

ACA director-general Datuk Zulkipli Mat Noor was quoted by Berita Harian as saying the probe was nearing its end.

"We will submit the findings to the Attorney-General's Chambers. If it is proven that no one has abused their position and the claims made according to procedures, the matter will cease to be an issue."

The MPs made headlines recently when Parliament was told that they had each submitted claims of more than RM10,000 a month this year.

Topping the list was Jeli member Mohd Apandi Mohamad who submitted such claims 10 times.

Meanwhile, Utusan Malaysia reported on its front page on Thursday that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is retiring on Oct 31, will make his "farewell" speech in Parliament on Oct 30.

The newspaper quoted Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim as saying that Dr Mahathir would also reply to several questions pertaining to the department.

Rais said the Cabinet at its meeting on Wednesday agreed that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would deliver his maiden speech as Prime Minister in the Dewan Rakyat on Nov 3. "He is also expected to express Parliament's gratitude to Dr Mahathir."

Abdullah will be sworn in as the country's fifth Prime Minister before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara on Oct 31.

Utusan Malaysia also reported plans by the Albukhary Foundation to set up a university catering to foreign Muslim students.

The foundation's academic adviser, Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Shukor Abdullah, said the university would be located in Johor, adding that it would enhance the quest for knowledge among Muslims, especially those from poor countries.