

## **Ever-growing PM's Department slims down**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**October 09, 2011**

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In an unusual move, the budget for the ever-growing Prime Minister's Department (PMD) has been slashed by 11.7 percent, or RM2.11 billion, for the year of 2012.

The Estimates of Federal Expenditure 2012, a report that details the expenditure of Budget 2012, stated that the allocation for the PMD has reduced to RM16,005,844,600 from RM18,118,889,900 in 2011.

putrajaya prime minister office 030408 According to the report released on Friday, the actual expenditure of PMD in 2009 was RM12,617,332,193.

The PMD remains as one of the top spending ministries, ranked third after the Treasury and the Education Ministry.

The trimming of allocation comes from development expenditure, which has decreased from RM10,779,257,900 in 2011 to RM7,771,554,800 in 2012, while the operating expenditure continued to increase from RM5,076,773,000 to RM5,739,550,700.

This decrease is something that goes against the conventional trend.

Department a 'messy bazaar'

In a statement released last year, DAP MP Liew Chin Tong described the PMD as a "bionic department" as its budget had quadrupled in 2011 since 2005 when it stood at RM4.1 million.

putrajaya aerial view 02 201106 The report revealed that the estimated number of staff hired in the PMD in 2012 remains unchanged at 29,763 relative to the year before.

Liew claimed that when former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad assumed power in 1981, there were merely 4,414 staff in the PMD.

In 2001, there were 9,673; 21,045 in 2003 and 25,332 in 2009, he claimed.

PMD, which has been called a "messy bazaar" by the opposition, is a giant department that contains various government agencies, including the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, the Auditor-General's Office, the Attorney General's Office, the Human Rights Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, the Performance Management & Delivery Unit (Pemandu), and the newly-established Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (SIAP) and Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD).

The opposition has been criticising the ever-increasing budget of PMD and has urged the government to place some of these agencies under Parliament or other ministries.

Still big spender

As in previous years, Budget 2012 raised eyebrows over several expenditures stated for the PMD.

Under the budget of the National Security Council, RM6,587,600 has been allocated for 'strategic communication'.

putrajaya pm office 030409 01 Among the activities of such communication is "to ensure efforts of psychological moves and psychological warfare are implemented in a planned and continuous way against specific targeted group".

The objective is to "enhance the appreciation and support of the people towards government policies or programmes in dispute so as not to affect public order, national security or undermine the authority of the government, while weakening and breaking the enemies' objections against the state in line with national security".

Biro Tata Negara, an agency that had drawn severe criticism for allegedly pushing a pro-Umno and communal slant in its programmes among civil servants, public universities students and public scholarship holders, has been given RM58,299,300 for operating expenditure, slightly lower than the RM66,879,200 in the year before.

Pemandu, the unit tasked to implement the Economic Transformation Programmes (ETP) and Government Transformation Programmes (GTP), has been allocated an operating expenditure of RM40 million, the same as 2011.

NONE However, the National Key Economic Area (NKEA), an initiative spearheaded by Pemandu, is listed under 'new policies' and has been given RM370 million for its 2012 operating expenditure and RM216,772,000 for its development expenditure.

Another item under 'new policies' named 'NKRA: Low Income Household - Delivery Task Force (DTF)', has been allocated RM230 million.

Combining these three items, the unit led by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Idris Jala, has some RM857 million in its pocket.

Two other items that eat up huge amount of PMD's development expenditure - though their objectives and content are not stated in the report - are the 'restructuring of society (Penyusunan Semula Masyarakat)' which has an allocation of RM800 million; and 'small projects' that have been allocated RM600 million