

**How expensive is Najib's team? RM10mil a year**  
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ANALYSIS With the announcement made by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak regarding additions to his cabinet today, questions arise about its 'bloated' nature.

For a country with a population of 30 million, Najib's additions means that we now have 35 full ministers and 27 deputy ministers, as the number of cabinet portfolios continues to increase.

The 35 members, 10 of whom now serve in the increasingly expanding Prime Minister's Department, form the cabinet in their capacities as full ministers.

Based on the remuneration packages set by the Malaysian Parliament, the new cabinet line-up would cost taxpayers about RM530,000 a month in terms of salaries, or RM6.3 million a year.

This is excluding the remuneration that the ministers receive in their capacity as parliamentarians, and also excludes extra allowances accorded to them.

If deputy ministers are included, the government now spends RM824,525 a month in basic salaries for all their top leaders, which makes up to RM9.9 million a year.

Najib defends expansion

Najib has defended the need to expand the cabinet, since MCA has now changed their stance on not accepting cabinet posts.

But comparisons with fellow Commonwealth countries show that our cabinet is inexplicably huge compared to the population.

India, a country with one billion people, had seen their new Prime Minister Narendra Modi keep the cabinet small, with only 23 members.

Cabinet ministers in India do not have basic salaries; they are paid according to daily allowances set by the Indian Parliament.

Meanwhile, in the UK, a country with a population of 63 million, there are 23 cabinet members, that cost the British taxpayers £1.57 million a year (RM8.54 million).

Australia, one of Malaysia's best Commonwealth allies, only has 18 cabinet members excluding the prime minister.

The Australian cabinet is one of the highest earning administrators in the Commonwealth, and chalk up an annual bill of AUD\$7.22 million (RM21 million)

The United States has 23 top level cabinet members that form the major decision making body, excluding the president himself.

Including the president's salary, the US cabinet, which governs a population of 313 million, costs USD5 million (RM16 million) a year in terms of salaries.

"This whole exercise was unnecessary. Today was not a cabinet reshuffle, it was a cabinet expansion. We should have less ministers and pay them better," DAP's Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong (below) told Malaysiakini.

He noted that the ministers are being appointed to be "showmen" and very few of them are "thought leaders", who have policy ideas.

"We should have fewer ministers, equip them better with research officers so that they come up with more policies," he said, calling for more competency from the cabinet.

He also noted that Najib had doubled the amount of ministers in the Prime Minister's Department since 2008.

"Now there are 10 ministers doing the job of five," he said.

'A fraction of the budget'

Housing and Local Government Minister Abdul Rahman Dahlan, however, says the cost of cabinet is a tiny fraction of the federal budget.

At RM10 million a year, it is only 0.004 percent of the federal budget, he said.

He also said that this is more prudent than the Selangor executive council (exco), whose recent payraises caused controversy.

"Selangor exco and Menteri Besar earn RM3.3 million a year (0.176 percent of the Selangor budget of RM1.85 billion).

"PM and cabinet earn RM10 million a year (0.0038 percent of RM264 billion). Who is higher?" the Kota Belud MP asked on Twitter.

At RM1.85 billion, the Selangor budget is less than one percent of the federal budget.

