

Ballooning cost of PM's Raya open house

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For his first Hari Raya open house as prime minister in 2009, Najib Abdul Razak spent RM1.715 million on food and drinks.

But in 2013, the cost incurred was RM2.88 million, and Kulai MP Teo Nie Ching (right) noted that it was a spike of almost 70 percent in five years.

The figures were revealed in a parliamentary written reply from Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim to the DAP lawmaker, who posted it on her Facebook today.

In 2009, Shahidan said in the reply, the estimated turnout for the prime minister and his cabinet's open house was between 80,000 and 90,000 people.

For last year, he said, the crowd numbered between "95,000-100,000 and more".

Interestingly, DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang in 2009 had quoted the mainstream media of putting the turnout for Najib's open house at between 50,000 and 60,000 people.

This is 20,000 less than Shahidan's estimate.

Lim (left) had raised the issue then to dispel the mainstream media's assertion that the large turnout indicated the people's support for Najib and his 1Malaysia slogan.

The veteran politician had, among others, cited the figures reported by the media for Najib's predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's open houses during his tenure, which were:

2003 - 70,000 (New Straits Times, Nov 26)

2004 - 200,000 (NST and Malay Mail, Nov 16)

2005 - 100,000 (Malay Mail, Nov 5)

2006 - 200,000 (Berita Harian, Oct 26)

2007 - 200,000 (NST, Oct 15)

2008 - 200,000 (Harian Metro, Oct 3)

"With Najib's first open house crowd reported as 50,000 to 60,000 in the mainstream media, is this an indication of reduced support for Najib and his 1Malaysia slogan as compared with the public support given to his predecessor?" Lim had asked.

He also pointed out that Abdullah won the biggest ever majority for BN in 2004 and then spearheaded the coalition to its worst ever defeat four years later.

Meanwhile, the figures cited by Shahidan in the parliamentary reply to Teo showed that in 2011, Najib and the cabinet's open house incurred a cost of RM1.697 million, the lowest since he became prime minister.

For that year, the crowd was estimated at between 80,000 and 90,000.

Shahidan also said the open houses were attended by Malaysians of all races and religions as well as tourists.

Apart from them, heads of government departments, foreign envoys as well as local and international corporate leaders were also present.

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