

PM's Dept spent RM4 bil last year
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Taxpayers forked out RM3.8 billion last year to pay for the salaries of almost 40,000 staff of the Prime Minister's Department and to cover the operating costs of the department and its subordinate agencies.

The department has been given an allocation of RM3.9 billion for this year, to meet its operating costs and salaries of 43,544 personnel.

The expenditure included costs for a secretariat for former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Early Childhood Education Unit (Permata), of which the Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's wife Rosmah Mansor is chairperson.

The figures were released by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Aziz in reply to a question from Taiping MP Nga Kor Ming, who inquired about the number of personnel the department had and how much it spent from 2003 to 2010.

The written answer stated that the department employed 21,405 personnel in 2003, with the number jumping to 43,544 this year, a slightly more than 100 percent jump in seven years.

The reply further said the huge jump in the number of department staff was to accommodate the "addition of new agencies and the increase in staff in departments and agencies".

Some of the new agencies created included a secretariat for former prime minister Abdullah, a secretariat for the National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) and the NEAC chairman's office.

Agencies that expanded their workforce included the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim), Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) and Permata.

'Wasteful and a burden on taxpayers'

At a press conference in the Parliament lobby later today, Nga described the huge outlay of staff for the PM's Department as wasteful and a burden on taxpayers. He dismissed the minister's reasons for staff expansion by the department as questionable.

"The entire state government of Perak only employs 7,900 people. The RM4 billion spent by the PM's Department is almost five times the budget of Perak," added the parliamentarian.

Querying why such a huge number of staff was needed by just one government department, Nga said this was indicative of the country's bloated civil service.

"Taiwan, with a population similar to us at 28 million, has only 530,000 government employees. Japan with a 120 million population employs 380,000 civil servants. But Malaysia, with a population of 28 million, has a civil service of 1.2 million."

"Why do we need such a huge number of civil servants? In the end, the taxpayers will pay for the cost, especially since some of the departments created, and where staff were increased, have dubious functions," added Nga.

He urged the government to look into the huge ratio of the civil service proportionate to the nation's population and to restructure the government to avoid wastage.

This is not the first time the government or the PM's Department has been accused of wastage by the opposition.

The government has come under fire for alleged 'leakages' in government procurements and the PM's Department has been quizzed on expenses paid by it for 'first lady' Rosmah on her US trip.

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