

It's RM26,000 a day to maintain homes of PM, DPM
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Prime Minister Najib Razak's recently announced Budget 2011 has revealed shocking details about the amount of money put into the "rental and maintenance" of the official residences of the country's top politicians.

According to Budget 2011, a whopping RM26,000 a day is spent on the rental and maintenance of the official residences of the prime minister and deputy prime minister, Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong said in Penang.

In a written reply to his recent parliamentary question, Liew said, he was told that RM4,149,000 was paid a year as rental to Putrajaya Holdings - the master developer of the federal administrative capital Putrajaya - and another RM1,896,616 on maintenance.

In the same reply, Liew added, Prime Minister Najib Razak revealed that the government forked out RM6 million a year for the rental and maintenance works for his official residence, Seri Perdana.

"The government also pays RM3.4 million (RM2,273,888 for rental and RM1,129,992 as maintenance) for Seri Setia, the deputy premier's official residence," he told a Post-Budget Dialogue organised by Penang-based Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute (Seri) last Friday.

"This makes up a total of RM9.4 million a year; in total, or about RM26,000 a day for the residences of the PM and DPM alone," added Liew, who is also Seri executive director.

Earlier last week, Liew (*left*) told a press conference at the Parliament lobby that an RM65 million spruce-up would be carried out on Najib's official residence over the next two years.

RM16b to be spent in 2 years

He said the renovation plan for the 10-year-old complex was part of the RM16 billion budget for the Prime Minister's Department, to be spent in 2011 and 2012.

About 80 participants attended the Seri dialogue, which aimed to provide a succinct analysis of the 2011 Budget and the implications of the various policies and measures introduced.

LLG Cultural Development Centre chairperson Toh Kin Woon, who chaired the dialogue, said the 2011 Budget was expected to provide an insight into the directions and strategies the government planned to execute under the 10th Malaysia Plan, New Economic Model and the Northern Corridor Economic Region.

Other speakers at the dialogue included economists Chan Huan Chiang and Manokaran Mottain.

In his delivery, Chan, who is Malaysian Institute of Economic Research associate research fellow, said that Malaysians have been living off the assets of this oil rich country.

"One definition of sustainable development is that the present generation must not deny future generations the same productive capacity," said Chan, who is also associate professor at the Centre for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

But, some good news for Penangites

He said that despite Malaysia having a population of 27 million, of whom 12 million were workers, there were only 4.5 million tax files and just about two million taxpayers.

He also warned that poor public delivery systems, such as poor basic amenities for the people, would eventually lead to security problems and a high crime rate.

However, not all of the items in the Budget were bleak news.

Senior economist at AmResearch Manokaran Mottain said despite the negative points, the Budget provided some good news for Penangites.

Manokaran said Penang was set to be the "Gateway to the Northern Corridor" and stood to be transformed into a modern and vibrant city, as well as a logistics and transportation hub.

Under the 10th Malaysian Plan, major investment projects for Penang included the second Penang Bridge, expansion of the Penang International Airport and improving the frequency and reach provided by the RapidPenang bus service.

"Penang's economy is expected to rebound strongly, by 7.7 percent this year, before moderating slightly to 5.7 percent in 2011," said Manokaran, who was a senior economist with Bank Negara from 1987 to 1996.

"Manufacturing is the most important component of the Penang economy, with the sector expected to grow by 8.5 percent and account for 50.9 percent of the state's GDP this year," he added

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