

Dzulkefly: Auditor's report too much to hide
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KUALA LUMPUR - Was the delay in announcing last year's Auditor General's Report a ploy to avoid its figures being used by members of parliament when debating the 2011 Budget?

Raising this question, PAS's Kuala Selangor MP Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said despite the prime minister taking pains to make sure that the damning report did not eclipse his budget and Economic Transformation Programme, the wastages and financial mismanagement by the government departments as revealed in the annual report was just too much to ignore.

The annual report has documented wastages and mismanagement by several government departments. Among others, it said luxury items were purchased by the military using the economic stimulus fund, mismanagement of the higher education loan PTPTN and poor quality of food distributed under the government's Additional Food Programme for school students.

Dzulkefly said the public now questioned whether the country's financial health had improved or worsened.

"The people want to know. And the Auditor General's report tells everything," he said, adding that Malaysians were able to draw conclusion about the country's performance based on international studies such as the annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) conducted by Transparency International.

Malaysia's ranking dipped further in the latest CPI released last week, from 4.5 to 4.4 out of 10, with 10 being the least corrupt.

"Our country's position remains at 56/178," Dzulkefli reminded.

Elaborating the AG's report, Dzulkefly said besides revealing that national's debts had risen to RM362.39 billion or 53.7 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the report also outlined other discrepancies and wastages as well as some good spending practice by the federal and state governments.

"There are some good ones, in the federal and the state. Those achievements must be recognised. It should, but not to the extent of being glorified. Yes, they should be made as examples," he said, but quickly added that bad spending culture had grown into a norm by the leaders.

Citing the example of Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) fiasco revealed by the AG's report in 2005, Dzulkefly noted that no government leaders had wanted to act on it despite the issue being pursued by opposition members and this could result in the making of yet another PKFZ scandal.

He warned that projects under ETP and the 10th Malaysia Plan, as well as those announced in the Budget would result in off-balance-sheet budgeting that would end up as the federal government's expenditure, ultimately widening the nation's physical deficit.

Dzulkefly also listed the wastages reported by the AG.

Among them was RM300,000 being spent to buy unnecessary items such as chandelier, home theater system and carpets by the Defence ministry; a RM500 million injection to Keretapi tanah Melayu despite suffering three consecutive years of losses amounting to RM1.45 billion; and a total of RM23.78 million in higher education study loan (PTPTN) distributed to students who had not applied for it.

“When will these stop?” he asked, adding that the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Pemandu) under the Prime Minister’s Department which had been allocated a budget of RM40 million should monitor those issues highlighted by AG’s report for the sake of the future generation. - Harakahdaily

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