

BN's Skewed Priorities: Temporary Teachers Suffer
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There are some really out-of-this-world characters around. For example, I am sure some of you would have come across someone whose household's rice supply is nearly exhausted therefore the wife can only serve modest vegetables and taufu for meals, and yet he would still pretend to be well-to-do. He's the sort who would rush to foot the bill if he was dining with his friends. He gets agitated when friends and family members advise him to keep his expenses in check. When he orders food in a restaurant, he would select expensive items lest people notice his shrinking wallet. Never mind if his wife and kids go hungry, but he must never lose face in front of people he's trying to impress.

Unscrupulous friends would certainly take advantage of such characters, and if the latter is a member of one's household, one would certainly have to grieve over such bad luck. But if such a character is the head of the government, millions of the rakyat will suffer.

In the eyes of the government, it simply does not matter if one pays RM56,350 for a pair of maritime binoculars that rightfully costs only RM1,940. There is no corruption; someone merely "overpaid" for it. But who cares? Someone in the government says we have cash to burn.

Then there is the creative transformation of funds meant for cow-rearing into condominium-buying? Payment was made even before the agreement was signed! What about the dirt-cheap selling price of RM74.20 per square feet for Sungei Besi Land that could easily worth RM1,000 per square feet? The sad thing is, the BN administration doesn't even bat an eyelid over such insane wastage of public funds.

When the BN administration saw the opposition handing out financial aid to deserving segments of society, it vowed not to be left behind and rushed to hand out RM100 to secondary and primary school students, never mind that no resources had actually been allocated for that purpose.

Now with our national debt skyrocketing, the government is scrambling to find other areas in which they can cut back on, and what's a more convenient scapegoat than temporary teachers?

The issue of temporary teachers arose from the federal government's inability to provide sufficient numbers of qualified teachers to schools. Most temporary teachers harbour dreams of being admitted into teachers' training centres and acquiring official teacher status. Although the Education Ministry announced in March this year that temporary teachers with more than 2 years' teaching experience would be admitted into teachers' training centres, most were unable to gain admission.

As if this current problem isn't bad enough – believe it or not – the BN administration has managed to make it worse! It has now created another stunning problem by converting the employment status of temporary teachers from "contract for service" to that of a "contract of

service", effectively exempting the Ministry from paying EPF, bonus, maternity and other basic benefits. Although temporary teachers are accorded a lower status than qualified teachers, their job scope and responsibilities are almost the same. What then is the justification for such huge differences between the two groups in terms of benefits and privileges? Apparently, the Education Ministry did not have sufficient funds, said Deputy Minister of Education Wee Ka Siong to the press at the Parliament lobby.

If BN leaders can just waltz into schools handing out RM100 each to 5,532,650 primary and secondary school students, using up about RM550,000,000, how can they now claim that they did not have sufficient funds to pay temporary teachers their benefits? Is that amount derived from monthly savings of RM200 per head snatched away from 7,000 temporary teachers? That only adds up to approximately RM16,800,000 per annum. Why doesn't the BN administration just derive that savings from giving less contracts to Shahrizat and her family?

Is the BN administration really cash-strapped? The numbers just don't add up, and the sooner the government stop taking the Rakyat for fools, the better.

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