

Luxury jet or public healthcare, PKR asks Putrajaya
The Malaysian Insider
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Opposition party PKR questioned Putrajaya on its priorities after The Malaysian Insider reported today of a RM120 million cut to Universiti Malaya Medical Centre's budget this year.

Questioning the budget cut to the "crucial service" of public healthcare in the country, the party's vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar said Malaysians would now wonder whether Putrajaya was more focused on the comfort of leaders or the citizens' quality of life and their struggle to cope with the rising cost of living.

"While the government is lavishly spending RM465 million on a new jet for the prime minister and refurbishing it for RM28 million, we are shocked to hear that UMMC is facing a RM120 million budget cut.

"How can the government cut the budget for such a crucial service in this country, where is their priority?" the Lembah Pantai MP said in a statement today.

"It is clear from this that Barisan Nasional's 'People First' slogan is just a dream," she added.

She said the people were already burdened by the rise in cost of medicines with the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST), adding that the 20% to 30% rise in cost of medicines last year is expected to increase further this year.

She added that only 320 drugs were accorded zero-rated status under the GST.

Nurul Izzah said UMMC was an important hospital, especially for low-income earners in Lembah Pantai, and the budget cut would result in a decline in medical services to the people in her constituency.

She said there was also an urgent need to streamline the needs of the hospital which come under the Education Ministry and those that were under the jurisdiction of the Health Ministry.

"I urge the government to get their priorities right.

"The mandate given by the people cannot be misused for the luxury of leaders.'

The Malaysian Insider reported today that doctors at UMMC were concerned that patient care would be compromised after the teaching hospital's budget for 2015 was reduced to RM387 million against an expenditure of RM510 million last year.

And as a teaching hospital, they said that the cut would also affect the quality of education provided to medical students.

Doctors also said the budget cut was expected to put a further strain on UMMC's ability to provide patient care given that it was expecting a rise in the number of patients switching over from private hospitals after the implementation of the GST at 6%.

Last month, PKR secretary-general Rafizi Ramli revealed that Putrajaya had ordered a new private jet for Datuk Seri Najib Razak's use, bringing the current tally of jets owned by the government to seven.

He said the new jet, an Airbus ACJ320, was secured through a direct negotiation hire-purchase deal with Jet Premier One.

Jet Premier One is the same company handling the current Airbus ACJ319 jet used by the prime minister, which was secured for RM28.8 million yearly in hire purchase and RM5.5 million in yearly maintenance cost, excluding the cost of fuel. – April 18, 2015.

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