

Dr Mahathir: Privatiser like I did to reduce civil service

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By Sean Augustin

Former PM says his privatisation policy helped trim the number of civil servants, adding Prime Minister Najib Razak is to blame for 1.6 million under govt payroll now.

SHAH ALAM: Dr Mahathir Mohamad says that he had trimmed the civil service through the privatisation of government agencies.

The former prime minister said by carrying out the privatisation of government agencies, the government also did not have to spend a lot to pay the wages of their staff. He did not provide any examples, but in the 1980s, he oversaw the privatisation of the national electricity board (NEB) and the telecoms department.

Mahathir said this in response to a question on the bloated civil service.

“When Najib Razak took over as prime minister, the number of civil servants increased.

“We don’t need this. Some of them have sinecure jobs, where they don’t work but are still getting paid.

“We need to transfer them to the private sector which can afford them so we can save money,” he told the audience at a dialogue held here last night.

The government began implementing its privatisation policy in the 1980s, with the NEB becoming Tenaga Nasional while the telecoms became Telekom Malaysia, or just TM, as we know it today.

Mahathir went on to claim that when he stepped down as prime minister in 2003, there were less than one million civil servants but that figure has now risen to 1.6 million.

“This was done to gain popularity without thinking about the repercussions.”

In February, it was reported that the Malaysian civil service is the largest in the world by ratio against the size of the population, with one civil servant for every 19.37 people in the country.

Second Finance Minister Johari Abdul Ghani was quoted as saying that the bloated civil service of 1.6 million is causing the government’s expenditure to rise drastically yearly.

However, he said Putrajaya will not be taking any action to reduce the number of civil servants.

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