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malaysia

Lawmakers: RM2m food budget a day for illegal foreigners hard to swallow

By Gho Chee Yuan
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Detained suspected illegal migrant workers from Indonesia stand before their documents are checked during a crackdown on illegal migrant workers in Nilai, outside Kuala Lumpur September 1, 2013. — Reuters picPETALING JAYA, Jan 7 — The government's RM2 million daily allocation to house illegal foreigners in the country received mixed reaction from politicians from both sides of the divide.

Sungai Besar MP Datuk Noriah Kasnon said the allocation for the illegals was higher than allocation set aside for the poor.

"The government through the Welfare Department only spends RM300 a month to support the country's poor elderly folks," she said.

"Spending RM35 a day for illegal foreigners is too high. The government must tighten border security to prevent illegals from entering the country."

Petaling Jaya Selatan MP Hee Loy Sian believed spending RM35 a day on food and other basic needs was high.

"It is too much. I think the ideal range should be between RM15-RM20," he said.

"This is just unnecessary spending. The government can actually cut down cost by not outsourcing catering contracts."

Hee said the RM850 million allocated to house these illegals can be channelled elsewhere.

"The money can be used to provide incentives for local employers to hire locals for jobs, thus making us less reliant on foreign labour."

Meanwhile, Seputeh MP Teresa Kok said the government should send these illegal immigrants back to their countries as they were burden to Malaysia.

"We are too reliant on foreign workers and we need to find a holistic measure to address the problem."

Batu MP Tian Chua viewed the RM2 million as wastage as it showed we are unable to address the problem of illegal foreigners.

"In theory, the huge amount of money should not be spent on them. We are now forced to pay the price for not having a competitive working environment.

He said the government should revamp the entire workforce to ensure more locals took up work in the technical and service sectors.

"Presently, many locals refuse to work as technicians or restaurant workers. This has opened the windows for foreigners to fill the vacancy."

Setiawangsa MP Datuk Ahmad Fauzi Zahari said spending RM2 million a day to house 68,000 foreigners is exorbitant.

"It is a huge figure but I do not know whether the government is bound by any International Conventions which require certain standards that must be met by the government in the treatment of illegal immigrants.



"Why are there so many illegal immigrants in the country? Are we treating them so well that everyone just wants to be here?"

Bukit Bintang MP Fong Kui Loon said the government should verify the identities of foreigners as soon as possible.

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"There must be a time frame as the government could not continue to feed them without any limit."

The Malay Mail yesterday reported there were presently 68,000 illegal foreigners detained at 10 detention centres nationwide.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the illegals could not be repatriated due to immigration problems in their countries of origin.

What can be done with RM850m?

The government spends some RM850 million annually for the 68,000 illegal immigrants detained in the country.

Many point out the amount was bigger than the allocation provided for certain sectors in the yearly budget and could be better spent on the taxpayers instead.

In fact, the construction of certain buildings were a fraction of the amount spent on the immigrants.

Below is a list of buildings and its cost and allocations provided by the government for various projects under the 2014 Budget.

Buildings	Cost (RM)
Bangunan Tunku Syed Putra, Penang	18 million
KL court complex	270 million
Langkawi hospital	72 million
Serdang hospital	690 million
Rembau district hospital	122.6 million
Temerloh hospital	480 million
National Heart Institute	12.2 million
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia	85.44million
SJKC Kheng Chee, Puchong, Selangor	5 million

Public project (as per 2014 Budget)

RM130mil to subsidise rural air transport, especially for those in Sabah and Sarawak.

Infrastructure (as per 2014 Budget)

1. RM980 million for the refurbishment and upgrading of 437 kilometers of rural road networks nationwide.
2. RM500 million for the Pan-Borneo Highway project;
3. RM457 million for the provision of potable water to 8,000 houses in rural areas.
4. RM179 million allocated to build and refurbish 20,000 houses for poor people in rural areas
5. RM202 million for refurbish Angkatan Tentera Malaysia quarters.
6. RM578 million for the implementation of Program Perumahan Rakyat which involves the construction of 16,473 housing units.
7. RM146 million allocated under Program Perumahan Rakyat Disewa and Perumahan Rakyat Bersepadu with involving 600 units of houses.

Education (as per 2014 Budget)

1. RM530 million for preschool programmes as well as set up 93 preschools in national-type primary school
2. RM831 million for building 33 new schools and upgrading existing ones, including dilapidated schools