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PM's overseas trips cost RM8.5m

THE Government spent RM8.548 million on 16 official visits abroad by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad between Jan 1 and June 16.

Last year, Dr Mahathir went on 14 visits costing RM1.8 million and 16 trips costing RM2.5 million in 2000.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas told Datuk Dr Hassan Mohamed Ali (Pas-Parit Buntar) that the visits were aimed at improving bilateral ties and identifying possible joint ventures.

"Some of the visits were by special invitation to the Prime Minister to deliver keynote addresses as many countries have identified him as a good Islamic leader.

"Although the amount spent on the trips is a lot, the returns have more than compensated for the cost," Douglas said, adding that only one visit was a private trip.

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