

RM17m spent on PM and wife's trips
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The government spent a total of RM17 million on official visits by the prime minister and his spouse between 2008 and mid-2011.

A parliamentary written reply to Batu MP Tian Chua also stated that RM8 million was spent on official visits by the deputy prime minister and his spouse during the same period.

Based on data to date, the cost of visits by the prime minister and his spouse has grown from RM1.74 million in 2008 to RM5.4 million in 2010.

For the first half of 2011, the expenditure has exceeded that of 2010.

In contrast, costs incurred by officials visits of the deputy premier and his spouse have decreased from RM2.75 million in 2008 to RM1.39 million in 2010.

Still, in the first half of 2011, the cost has doubled that of 2010.

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was prime minister throughout 2008 while Najib Abdul Razak was his deputy. Najib took over from Abdullah on April 9, 2009.

'PM must justify costs'

Chua's question had asked the Prime Minister's Department to state the exact date, location and purpose of these visits, but this was left unanswered.

He also asked about the "management allocation" for the premier's wife, to which the department replied that no such funds exist.

Met later, Chua said the government must be able to justify the premier's travel costs at a time that it is cutting subsidies for fuel, sugar and electricity.

"The prime minister must explain the tangible benefits gained from these visits (that are) paid for by the rakyat.

"How many MOUs, economic benefits and diplomatic understandings have we achieved?

"What has he brought back from his visits to New York and from Kazakhstan?" asked Chua.