

'Justify RM48m bill to upkeep PM, DPM residences'
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The government has been asked to justify the high cost of maintaining the official residences of the prime minister and deputy prime minister at a time when it is slashing subsidies for essential goods.

PAS women's wing deputy chief Siti Maria Mahmud (right) said this was necessary because the government was asking the people to adjust their lifestyles to meet the current economic environment.

"When it comes to educating the public about savings, it should start with the leaders," Siti Maria told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

She was commenting on a parliamentary written reply to Rantau Panjang MP Siti Zailah Mohd Yusof, who is also the wing's chief, from the Prime Minister's Department.

According to the written reply, RM48 million was spent between 2006 and 2010 to maintain the residences of the two national leaders.

"It costs so much and yet those residences are not in use all the time," said Siti Zailah, who was also present.

Almost RM33 million was spent on rental alone for both properties during that period. Rental was paid to Perbadanan Putrajaya.

RM33,000 monthly water bill?

Another RM3.5 million was spent on repair work, RM10.2 million on electricity and RM1.9 million on the water bill.

"We never knew how big is the family of the prime minister and deputy prime minister, until now," chimed in DAP youth chief Anthony Loke, who was also at the press conference.

He contended that if the amount is divided up from five years and then by month, the end result will show that they government paid RM160,000 a month for electricity and RM33,000 a month for water for both official residences.

"That is enough to pay my electricity bill for 100 years and enough water for 6,000 people," he said incredulously.

Siti Maria, who is also Kota Raja parliamentarian, added that the government must be transparent with the rental contract it signed with Perbadanan Putrajaya on the rental of the two properties and whether in the long term after paying such a high rental, the government will get to own the properties.

The high cost of government expenditures has become a sticking point for the opposition, as the government implemented a subsidy rationalisation programme to reduce public "addiction" to what Najib has described as the rakyat's "opium".

The opposition has contested that the government should also fix leakages and corruption within the system first, as well as reduce the lavish expenditures of government departments and public officials.

This is not the first time the PM's official residence was dragged into the mess, after a RM65 million price tag for renovations was brought into question in Oct 2010.

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