

Wikileaks: Pak Lah's 'visit' became luxury holiday
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Then-prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's 2006 visit to St Vincent and the Grenadines failed to convince US diplomats of the absence of shady deals involving the Caribbean nation's Premier Ralph Gonsalves.

This was after Gonsalves' visit to Malaysia, deemed by the US as part of "globetrotting" which St Vincent and the Grenadines could "ill-afford", raising suspicion of financing by "third parties".

US deputy chief of mission to Barbados Mary Ellen T Gilroy made this observation in a diplomatic cable from the US embassy in Bridgetown, leaked by whistleblower website Wikileaks.

According to the cable classified as "sensitive", Abdullah's (left) visit from April 29 to May 2 "was really a vacation", and not a "working visit" as claimed by Wisma Putra as there was "no concrete agenda".

The cable was leaked on Aug 30, a day before current Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's now scrutinised visit to Perth, Australia.

The PM was conspicuously missing from Malaysia on National Day, but the jet said to be his official plane was spotted by a Malaysiakini reader at the Perth Airport on Aug 31.

Malaysiakini contacted PM's aides to get confirmation but was repeatedly refused the information.

However, national news agency Bernama had on the following day reported that he was there for physiotherapy for a knee injury and held a meeting with Malaysian students in Perth.

Working visit included vacation on luxury islands

In the cable, Gilroy wrote that Abdullah had "vacationed for a few days on the Grenadine islands Mustique and Canuoan" after meeting with Gonzalves, who had also accompanied him on a fishing trip.

She noted that the Grenadine islands of Mustique and Canuoan are "stylish" compared to the "squalid" main island of St Vincent.

Mustique is a private island containing private villas, most of which owned by international celebrities, while Canuoan is home to high-end resorts and a golf course developed by mogul Donald Trump.

Gilroy observed that besides the initial meeting with Gonsalves upon Abdullah's arrival, Abdullah's only official undertaking on the trip was an address to the St Vincent parliament, before departing to Jamaica on May 2.

According to a Bernama report in April 2006, Abdullah is expected to "address the House of Assembly, meet ordinary Vincentians and be briefed about Malaysian investment projects in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines".

The delegation included then works minister S Samy Vellu, then youth and sports minister Azalina Othman, then higher education minister Mustapa Mohamed and then deputy foreign minister Joseph Salang "as well as senior officials of the Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Ministry and other government agencies".

"The visit would enable the PM to establish personal contact and forge closer rapport and understanding with both Gonsalves and (Jamaican PM Portia) Simpson Miller.

"He will also evaluate potential areas of cooperation and seek ways to enhance trade and investment

activities between Malaysia and the two Caribbean countries,” Bernama reported.

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