

## **Govt saved RM233.4m from Apec Summit budget – Azmin**

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PARLIAMENT | The International Trade and Industries Ministry saved RM233.4 million in initial allocations approved for Malaysia to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Summit this year.

Its minister Mohamed Azmin Ali said the government spent only RM66.6 million from an overall RM350 million allocation approved for Apec-related expenditures between 2019 and 2021.

"We saved RM233.4 million. The ministry returned the amount to the Finance Ministry because the (finance) ministry needed a large allocation for economic stimulus packages to assist the people affected by Covid-19," said Azmin during the winding-up of his ministry's committee stage debate of the Supply Bill (Budget) 2021 today.

Of the RM66.6 million amount spent, Azmin said RM13.1 million was channelled to three ministries - the Finance, Tourism, and Home ministries.

He said another RM53.5 million was spent on 146 Apec-related meetings at various levels from December 2019 in Langkawi to the final virtual Apec Summit on Nov 20 in Kuala Lumpur.

A further RM25 million allocation for the Apec 2020 conference under Budget 2021 came under scrutiny as there was already an approved RM300 million allocation under Budget 2020 for the physical conference that was converted into a virtual session due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

"Overall RM24.99 million was needed to settle outstanding payments due in 2021," said Azmin.

Abdul Azeez Rahim (BN-Baling) and Ahmad Maslan (BN-Pontian) were among government MPs who questioned the amount saved due to the conference being held online.

Others from the opposition include Wilfred Madius Tangau (Harapan-Tuaran) who previously filed a motion to slash the RM25 million allocation - RM2.5 million for salaries and RM22.5 million for services and supplies - to only RM5 million.

Azmin further clarified that the RM350 million allocation was already reduced from an initial RM635 million approved by the previous Pakatan Harapan administration in October 2018.

In July 2019, he said the amount was revised to RM350 million, to be spent in three stages, with the bulk of funds allocated for this year.

Lim Guan Eng (Harapan-Bagan) later questioned whether Azmin would be open for the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee to scrutinise the remaining RM25 million allocations for next year to ensure its spendings were justified.

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