

**DAP questions Tourism Ministry's 'lavish' spending**  
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**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, July 17 — Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen must explain why her ministry blew a cool RM3.4 million on hosting an international conference, the DAP's Anthony Loke said today.

He questioned if she had "misled" the Cabinet over the amount required to host the three-day Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) 2012 conference organised by Tourism Malaysia (TM), an agency under Ng's ministry.

"We are not against hosting an international conference, but hosting an international conference is not a licence for the ministry to spend lavishly, to spend according to their wishes, to spend unnecessarily," said Loke.

In a detailed expenditure report of the PATA 2012 conference shown to reporters, Loke highlighted that RM618,695.60 was used "just for publicity."

He also said catering for the welcome dinner and charity gala dinner cost RM250 per person.

Loke said that the "actual cost for the conference" itself was only RM806,850, including the four turtle mascots, which cost a total of RM48,000.

The Rasah MP said he had raised the question of the turtle sculptures in Parliament, adding that a Parliamentary reply dated June 18, 2012 had confirmed that the four "custom-made" replicas priced at RM12,000 per unit were ordered for the conference.

"I want to ask Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen... did she mislead the Cabinet?" said Loke, claiming that the final amount spent was "twice" the amount she "presented to the Cabinet."

Loke showed reporters minutes of a TM meeting dated March 30, 2012 which indicated that the Cabinet had approved RM1,738,300 on February 22.

But the minutes showed that it was proposed that the TM's 2010 surplus be used for the final conference cost of RM3,402,465.60, a proposal that was approved by the acting director of TM, Datuk Haji Azizan Noordin.

Loke slammed the agency for its "lavish" spending when the government's Budget deficit is increasing.

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