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Anxiety over silence on highway poll

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THREE months have passed since a directive was issued by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department for a public opinion survey to be conducted on six inter-urban expressways.

Residents directly affected by the SPRINT Expressway are still waiting to be respondents of the survey.

In fact, they are in the dark on whether their opinions will ever be sought.

Yue Sau Him, chairman of the Action Committee of Residents Associations, Business Committees and Rukun Tetangga said he read about the intended survey from the newspapers but to date, neither he nor any of the other committee members have been contacted by the Sistem Penyuraian Trafik KL Barat Sdn Bhd, the concessionaire for the SPRINT Expressway.

The committee, formed early this year to protest against the proposed SPRINT Expressway and toll collection, represents 12 residents' groups.

Yue said the 12 will be directly affected by the expressway and their views should be sought.

He said if the concessionaire chose to interview and seek the views of the selected few, the views obtained might not represent those of genuine residents.

Yue said a memorandum containing 23,000 signatures was handed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad about three months ago through the Members of Parliament of Petaling Jaya Utara and Petaling Jaya Selatan but there had been no response so far.

He said on their part they had carried out awareness campaigns to inform residents on how their lives will be adversely affected if they lost the battle against SPRINT.

Yue said if the company went ahead with its plan to impose toll and provided only two toll-free lanes, a situation similar to that in Bandar Sunway along the Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong alignment would be created.

He anticipated heavy congestion along the toll-free lanes especially at the Section 16 and Section 17 junctions and the spillover might affect traffic flow on the expressway.

The SPRINT toll issue dates back to early this year when 12 groups from various sections in Petaling Jaya joined forces to protest against the expressway.

The committee maintained that the proposal to build the toll plaza in front of Eastin Hotel should be scrapped.

"We are not against development - build a new road and we will pay. It is not fair to impose toll for an upgraded stretch," Yue had echoed repeatedly.

The directive to conduct the public opinion survey on the six inter-urban expressways came in July and was supposed to have ended last month but the survey period was extended.

The survey is supposed to seek people's opinions on the route alignment, toll rates as well as locations of interchanges on the highways.

The six highways are the New Pantai Expressway, Western Kuala Lumpur Traffic Dispersal System or SPRINT Expressway, Ampang-Kuala Lumpur Elevated Highway, Kajang Traffic Dispersal System, New North Klang Straits Bypass and Butterworth Outer Ringroad.

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