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`RM192m was paid to PLUS'

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SUNGAI SIPUT, Thurs. - A major portion of the RM240 million allocated to highway concessionaires was paid to Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today.

He said PLUS was paid RM192 million while the remainder went to others.

Samy Vellu said this when asked to clarify the difference in figures quoted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and himself.

Dr Mahathir had told reporters at his Hari Raya open house that the Government paid RM240 million in compensation to concessionaires last year after it rejected their applications to increase toll rates.

However, Samy Vellu said last Thursday that the amount paid was RM192 million when he announced that toll would be increased after the Chinese New Year.

The four concessionaires are North-South Expressway operator Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan Bhd, Expressway Lingkaran Tengah Sdn Bhd (North-South Central Link), Kesas Sdn Bhd (Shah Alam Expressway) and Konsortium Lebuhraya Kulim-Butterworth Sdn Bhd (Kulim-Butterworth Expressway).

Samy Vellu told reporters this after attending the Hari Raya open house of Lintang Assemblyman Datuk Padil Harun.

On the demonstration by about 100 people led by the Segambut MCA division at the Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong against high toll charges, he said the Cabinet had fixed the rate after an indepth study.

"They must know it costs RM1.13 billion to build the stretch as it runs through a very developed area."

Samy Vellu said there were 12 interchanges along the 40km highway and a kilometre of the expressway cost the contractor an average of RM36 million.

He said the interchanges cost between RM20 million and RM35 million.

"On top of that, about 40 to 50 per cent of the traffic will not be paying toll because it is localised traffic," he said, adding that the one-way toll of RM1.50 was reasonable.

Samy Vellu said the highway cost was high as the contractor had to relocate infrastructure such as telecommunications cables, drains and electricity cables.

"On top of that, the contractor had to pay for land acquisition," he added.

Toll along the stretch will be imposed from Monday.

In another development, Samy Vellu chided local authorities in Selangor which issued certificates of fitness to housing developers who failed to build interchanges as promised.

"They were supposed to build interchanges as outlined in the layout plan but did not do so when their housing schemes were completed," he said, adding that these irresponsible developers now claimed they had no money.

Samy Vellu said he would propose that developers construct interchanges first before building the houses in future.

He said there were at least six cases of developers in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur who failed to build interchanges as outlined in their plans.

In Petaling Jaya, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said his ministry would discuss with the Works Ministry Samy Vellu's call not to issue certificates of fitness to developers who failed to build interchanges.

He said further discussions needed to be held between the two ministries

because issuance of CF was based on various conditions concerning the building structure and its surroundings.

"As long as the structure is safe and it has the approval of the Public Works Department, Fire and Rescue Department, the local authority and other related departments, the CF can be issued.

"Its issuance has nothing to do with the building of an interchange, unless it was already stated (in the conditions)," he said.

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