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Pas may be reconsidering no-toll policy

PAS may be having second thoughts about a no-toll policy for the East Coast Highway to Terengganu, if a statement by its president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Nor in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday is any indication.

Fadzil, the Opposition Leader, called on Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu to liaise with Terengganu Menteri Besar Abdul Hadi Awang on the best solution and approach to implement the East Coast Highway project.

As soon as Pas came to power after the Nov 29 general election, Hadi had stated Pas' policy that no tolls would be imposed in Terengganu. Samy Vellu, a day later, said the highway could not be built if toll was not allowed.

During debate on the Supplementary Supply (1999) (No. 2) Bill 1999, Fadzil (Pas-Pendang) accused the Federal Government of shelving infrastructure projects in Terengganu after Pas had gained control of the State.

Clarifying this, Samy Vellu said he did not make any statement about shelving projects.

He explained that what he had said was that if the Terengganu State government decided to abolish all tolls, then any implementation of highway projects in Terengganu must be discussed in the Cabinet.

"If the State is prepared to continue with the project, we can proceed with the project," said Samy Vellu.

Fadzil then called on the Minister to liaise with Hadi on the matter.

"This is because the land for the project has been acquired. It is most unwise if the project is abandoned.

"Even though Pas does not agree with the increase in toll charges (on existing highways), I believe this matter can be sorted out with the Terengganu State Government. We do not want any road project to be abandoned".

Earlier, Samy Vellu said the Kelantan State Government would have to re-submit its application for soft loans from the Federal Government for its water supply scheme.

He said the application by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat had been discussed but due to the election, the approval was delayed.

Fadzil criticised the Federal Government for discriminating against the Kelantan State Government because it was under Pas leadership.

He claimed the soft loan had been rejected by the Federal Government.

Standing up to interrupt his speech, Samy Vellu said Nik Aziz had submitted the application to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the matter had been discussed by the Cabinet.

"I believe Nik Aziz must re-submit the application after the election to enable the Cabinet to discuss it again".

Samy Vellu clarified that the loan was meant for a privatisation project between the Kelantan State Government and Thames Water from United Kingdom.

However, the matter was not referred back to the Federal Government and the Economic Planning Unit.

"The regulations have been set. Any State Government wanting to implement privatisation projects must follow the rules. We have no objection to Kelantan's application but they must refer it back to the EPU and Federal Government for further discussion".

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