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Samy-Expressway

WORK ON EAST COAST EXPRESSWAY ON SCHEDULE, HITCH-FREE

KUANTAN, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- Work on the RM1.27-billion east coast expressway, designed to shorten travel time from Kuala Lumpur to here almost by half, is on schedule and hitch-free.

With 15 per cent of it completed so far, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said he was convinced the expressway could be ready by mid-August 2003.

The 169-km expressway is being built by MTD Capital Bhd.

"The government is paying for the entire project and we shall decide later who should be operating the expressway," he told reporters after opening the 2001 Malaysia Highway Games 2001 here today.

With land acquisition for the project completed, landowners still dissatisfied with the compensation quantum can bring their case to court, he said.

When completed the expressway, linking Karak with Kuantan, should cut travel time from Kuala Lumpur to here from four hours presently to two-and-a-half hours.

On a different matter, Samy Vellu said he was perplexed that government back-benchers in Parliament yesterday urged the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to dismiss non-performing ministers.

Samy Vellu said while opposition back-benchers heaped praise on ministers for personally replying to queries during question time, some government MPs instead alleged that ministers chose to stay away from house sittings.

"I reckon opposition MPs know better which ministers make a point to be in Parliament every day," he said.

As the Cabinet normally meets on Wednesday, none of the ministers attended yesterday's Dewan Rakyat sitting and Samy Vellu said that it was inappropriate for MPs to demand that ministers be present when they have national obligations to run the country.

When opening the games earlier, Samy Vellu urged staff of companies operating tolled highways and related agencies to help dispel public misconception about about toll collection.

They should convince the public that highway-users did get value for money and that " well-run and user-friendly expressways contribute to national prosperity and comfort," said Samy Vellu.

A total of 1,500 participants representing 17 contingents are taking part in the three-day games featuring football, netball, badminton, sepaktakraw, ping pong, volley ball and bowling competitions.

-- BERNAMA

ROS RYN