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Parliament-Mahathir  
PM MAKES HIS PRESENCE FELT IN DEWAN RAKYAT

KUALA LUMPUR, April 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's attendance in the Dewan Rakyat today was something members were looking forward to, not only to get answers from the horse's mouth but also to prompt people to take up their seats early.

The Prime Minister was already in the House when the bell was rung at 10am to signal the start of the proceedings.

It was obvious his presence had an impact even on the opposition as Chow Kon Yeow (DAP-Tanjong) took the opportunity to mention Dr Mahathir's name in his supplementary question to Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

Chow asked whether the government planned to name the proposed second Penang bridge as "Dr Mahathir Bridge" in appreciation of his contributions to the country and whether it would be made toll free.

Chow's question apparently amused Dr Mahathir, who flashed a smile on hearing it.

"That I leave it to Yang Amat Berhormat (PM). Normally, he does not agree to such suggestions but in this case I would not know...but I think he will not accept," said Samy Vellu with a laugh.

On the question of toll, Samy Vellu said the bridge would be costly to build and as such toll would be imposed.

However, the toll rate would not be the same as that for the existing Penang Bridge, whose toll should have been raised twice as provided for under the concession agreement but was not done so as to protect the interests of Penangites, he said.

Earlier, when replying to Chow's question on the latest developments on the second bridge, Samy Vellu said design work had yet to be submitted and the ministry was waiting for the Finance Ministry's approval to appoint consultants.

He said the project site had been identified and, in fact, soil tests for the 24km-long bridge had been completed.

Samy Vellu also said the Jelutong Expressway was a privatised project being implemented by the Penang government.

As at last February, the physical progress of Phase I of the project had reached 55 percent, and among the works completed were site clearing, dump site excavation and earth strengthening.

Land reclamation and bridge construction works were being actively undertaken, he said.

Samy Vellu said Phase I was expected to be fully completed by this December.

-- BERNAMA  
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