

Billboard privatisation: AMK wants MB to answer
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The PKR Youth wing (AMK) is demanding answers from Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Mohamad Hassan on the giving of all rights for the installation of advertisement billboards in the state to a private company.

"It is shocking that Semarak Media Sdn Bhd, said to have no track record in the industry, is awarded the monopoly on the advertisement billboards in the state, and has is allegedly increasing rentals to over 10 times the going rate," PKR Youth deputy information chief Najwan Halimi said in a statement.

NONThe Youth wing was commenting on yesterday's expose on the matter by Malaysiakini, which highlighted the concerns of some 12 outdoor advertising companies in the state that are furious about the privatisation policy, which they said was to their detriment.

The companies are unhappy that Semarak Media, given monopoly over the multi-million ringgit business, has no track record in the advertising industry and that it aims to hike the billboard rental charges by more than 10 times the current rates.

Outdoor Advertising Association of Malaysia (OAAM) vice-president Alex Yew said the billboards have been under the purview of local governments - until Negeri Sembilan decided to centralise it under the Yayasan Negeri Sembilan (YNS) and hand the management of billboards to Semarak Media.

AMK is demanding that Mohamad discloses:

- * Why the new policy was made and the rationale for giving the authority over advertisement billboards to YNS, which Mohamad chairs;

- * Under what criteria was Semarak Media chosen, despite it having no track record in the advertising industry; and

- * Is it true that the cost of rental has been jacked up by more than 10 times the industry standard?

The matter was also raised in the state legislative assembly, which is currently in session, by Lobak assemblyperson Anthony Loke, who is also DAP Youth chief.

Mohamad is expected to answer Loke's query in the assembly tomorrow.

