

MB grilled over billboard monopoly in state assembly

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Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Mohamad Hasan was today urged to explain to the state legislative assembly why the state has forced through a monopoly in the billboard industry.

dapsy memo to suhakam 111105 loke siew fookDuring the proceedings this morning, Opposition Leader Loke Siew Fook (DAP-Lobak, left) flung a barrage of questions at the state government over its decision to allow Semarak Media Sdn Bhd to take over the industry.

"Was this done through an open tender? Media companies now have to pay Semarak Media RM18,000 a year. This is very high," he said.

"Why give exclusive rights and privileges to this company? Semarak Media (has been) a dormant company. I am demanding an explanation from the state government."

Mohamad is expected to answer Loke's queries tomorrow when winding up on points raised during the three-day sitting.

Malaysiakini reported yesterday that the state government had ordered local councils to transfer their jurisdiction over billboards to Yayasan Negeri Sembilan (YNS), a state-run foundation chaired by Mohamad.

Outdoor advertising companies have claimed that the foundation will charge them over 10 times the current fee, which industry players said is exorbitant.

For example, a 40 x 10ft billboard will cost RM18,000 a year, compared to the previous cost of less than RM1,500.

The Outdoor Advertising Association of Malaysia said the state government had argued that this was necessary to standardise the billboard format and to fund charity programmes under YNS.

When the billboard company owners met YNS to protest against the decision, they were told that the agreement with Semarak Media will proceed since a contract has been signed.

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