

One question, two different answers
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DAP is puzzled as to why the Sarawak Government has given different answers to the same question relating to contracts being awarded to companies to build or replace bridges that were submitted to the state legislative assembly last November.

When Chong Chieng Jen (DAP-Kota Sentosa) sought an explanation from Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud during his winding-up speech at the just-concluded sitting on Wednesday, the latter told him to find out from the two departments that supplied the answers.

A stunned Chong later told malaysiakini he was surprised at the chief minister's attitude as if he couldn't care less how his ministers were performing.

However, he suspected that the chief minister was trying to brush aside the question because he wanted to avoid talking about Titanium Management Sdn Bhd which his son Mahmud Abu Bekir Taib holds the majority equity.

The company was awarded in 2000 a RM947.844 million state contract for the design, construction and completion of replacement bridges.

This represented more than 50% of the total contract value of bridge projects under state and federal contracts awarded to a total of 33 companies between the year 2000 and 2006.

In a written question, Chong had asked Infrastructure, Development and Communications Minister Alfred Jabu to give the list of all contracts awarded by the state and federal governments for the construction of bridges in Sarawak from 2000-2006, the respective contract sums and actual sums of each of these bridges and the names of the contractors awarded the projects.

He also wanted to know how these tenders were given out.

Explanation on tenders

In a written reply in November, the minister attached an appendix of 33 companies awarded the contracts, including Titanium Management Sdn Bhd, the company with the largest single contract of nearly a RM1 billion worth of bridge projects.

He also explained how the tenders were awarded.

Thinking that the question had not been answered, Opposition Leader Wong Ho Leng (DAP-Bukit Assek) wrote in to ask for it. He received a written reply in March to exactly the same question from the minister which was different from the first reply in content.

This time, an updated list of the companies was not given.

In his brief reply, Jabu who is also a deputy chief minister merely said a total of 52 contracts for bridges had been given out since the year 2000 and that of this number, 24 contracts were for bridges only and the other 28 were for bridges together with road projects.

He added that since most of the contracts were in the process of implementation, it would be difficult to ascertain the total contract value.

Chong, who is also Bandar Kuching MP, alleged that the minister was not telling the truth.

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