

Samy ticked off for evading 'Smart' issue
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Works Minister S Samy Vellu has failed to answer the important questions concerning the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (Smart) toll tariff, said an opposition youth wing.

Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) Youth acting head Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin said the minister did not address the pertinent issues raised when asked by reporters on details of the 'secret' concession agreement.

"Samy Vellu failed to be straightforward when commenting on the toll charges. (He didn't explain) why the toll charges are so high,"

"We're disappointed with the way he answered questions concerning this matter," he said in a statement yesterday.

Two days ago, the youth wing revealed that toll charges for the tunnel linking Sungai Besi to Kuala Lumpur could start at RM2 - based on the 'secret' concession agreement - and is set to increase every five years.

The party also urged the minister to reveal all the documents pertaining to the project within seven days, failing which, a police report will be lodged.

Samy Vellu responded that those who threatened to file a police report against him over the alleged discrepancies of the Smart project could 'go to hell'.

"They (PKR) don't understand that to construct a 4km tunnel like this cost RM600 million while to construct a 4km road is only RM45 million," he was quoted as saying.

According to the 40-year concession agreement between Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel Sdn Bhd and the government, the company expects to generate revenue of RM36.4 million from toll collection in the first year, rising to RM79 million in the fifth year.

The figures are based on the concessionaire's 'modest' projection of around 24 million vehicles annually for the first five years.

This estimation is based on the traffic volume of the less-used dedicated highway linking the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to the Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas).

Wrong calculation

However, PKR Youth pointed out that the traffic volume projection in the agreement remains the same between 2022 and 2042 at 40.2 million vehicles annually so toll rates should remain the same.

"Samy Vellu failed to calculate the traffic volume projection as stated in the agreement," Shamsul said.

According to the document, the concessionaire will have obtained RM7.2 billion in cumulative revenue from toll collection by 2042, for a project that cost RM1.9 billion to

build.

Shamsul pointed out that by 2023, the government would have gotten all the returns from their investment costs on the building the tunnel and concessionaires would acquire profits up to RM5 billion.

"We urged the government to amend the Official Secrets Act as soon as possible so the information which concerns that public's interest can be revealed," he added.

Construction of the Smart project which started in 2003 aims to ease traffic flow and channel flood water to two retention ponds.

The structure comprises a 4km of double-deck underground motorway to direct traffic from Jalan Sungai Besi to Jalan Sultan Ismail and Jalan Tun Razak.

According to the Smart Tunnel website, the government is financing two-thirds of the project cost, or about RM1.3 billion.

On Feb 10, Drainage and Irrigation Department director-general Keizrul Abdullah said there would be a toll-free period of use in the first month of operations.

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