

Patau: Blame the system Samy, not PWD
Malaysiakini.com
Jun 20, 2007
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A Sarawak opposition leader has blasted Works Minister S Samy Vellu for blaming the public works departments (PWD) of Sarawak and Sabah for problems in implementation federal projects.

State Reform Party (Star) president Dr Patau Rubis said the minister should put the blame on the system of awarding government projects to "political main contractors".

He told a press conference that many sub-contractors and suppliers ended up financing these politically-connected contractors who have:

- little or no experience;
- no sense of financial management; or
- do not have enough money of their own to carry out projects pending reimbursement.

"PWD personnel should not be blamed for delays or shoddy workmanship when such contractors are involved," he said.

"Delays in payment to sub-contractors and suppliers also naturally result in delays to the project."

Patau said the policy or system should be changed and projects awarded only to main contractors who are capable technically and have the means to complete the job.

He was commenting on Samy's statement that his ministry was contemplating taking over the job in implementing federal projects in the two states because of "the difficulties faced by the existing implementing agencies" (or PWD).

He did not say whether these state agencies would be federalised or if a separate implementing agency would be established.

There has been no reaction from either state government to date.

'Best to date'

Patau said the Sarawak PWD is "efficient and professional" and that its director Hubert Thien is the best head of the department to date.

Patau said he has known Thien since 1987 when he was the Kuching division head of PWD "and he was already doing a good job".

"So don't blame the PWD if federal projects are delayed or not completed," Patau said.

He cited the stalled RM400 million Central Prison project outside Kuching as an example of how things can go wrong.

When the first main contractor failed to deliver, the federal government awarded the new contract to a company linked to some of the directors in the first company and added to the

budget so that the work would be completed, he claimed.

"What does this have to do with the PWD? It's the system that is wrong, and this must be changed." he said.

Patau cited two other examples - a bridge in Batang Kayan in Lundu and another in Sarikei -both delayed for similar reasons.

He said he has to speak out because the projects use taxpayers' money and there is much wastage of funds because of the wrong policy or system.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/68844>