

## **Pemandu Must Declare If Highway Deal Is Consistent With Najib's GTP**

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The Prime Minister Najib Razak started his premiership with much fanfare over his transformation programmes, starting with the "Government Transformation Programme" (GTP) launched in December 2009.

One of the key "National Key Result Area" (NKRA) contained within the GTP is to fight against corruption. The GTP admitted that "the perception of corrupt practices has risen in recent years, evidenced by Malaysia's declining ranking in Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). In 2009, Malaysia's ranked dropped 9 places from 47 to 56."

Najib's administration has since failed its own transformation objectives with Malaysia falling to its lowest level ever in TI CPI in 2011 at 60th place. The fall in rankings doesn't come as a surprise at all scandals being exposed hard and fast over the past two years including the RM12.5 billion Port Klang Free Zone project, RM9 billion naval patrol vessel and RM7.55 billion armoured personnel carrier acquisitions, the RM330 million "cows and condos" fiasco and now a RM7.07 billion West Coast Expressway privatisation concession.

To stop the rot, PEMANDU Chairman Koh Tsu Koon must declare if the latest mega-highway concession has been awarded according to the principles and policies set out by the GTP to meet the Prime Minister's goals on "transformation".

The GTP promised that "we will reduce leakages of funds allocated for national development and operational expenditure and ensure transparency in the award of contracts."

It further added that "it is well established that transparency is crucial for a fair and efficient government procurement process. This is because transparency increases public scrutiny on the procurement process and helps ensure that accountability and well-defined policies, regulations and procedures have been put in place and followed closely."

However the award of the RM7.07 billion 60-year highway concession to Europlus flies in the face of GTP's promises, especially with the unexplained increase in cost by 134% from RM3.02 billion and extension of concession period by 27 years from the original 33 signed in 2007.

PEMANDU must demand that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) disclose all details including the concession terms in the award to Europlus especially since the award was made via direct negotiation. It has been more than 5 days since the announcement made by Europlus on Bursa Malaysia and yet the Government has been steadfast in its refusal to shed light on the project.

PEMANDU must ensure that PMO is transparent and accountable by explaining the projected profits of the concessionaire, the future toll burden to be borne by commuters. As the agency in-charge of GTP which promised "people first, performance now", PEMANDU must ensure that lightning will not strike multiple times on the same spot as per previous BN government privatisation agreements. What's more, the Government had to extend a RM2.24 billion soft loan and up to 3% in interest subsidy to Europlus commercial loans to undertake the WCE project.

The rakyat has been "taxed" mercilessly with lopsided concession agreements signed with independent power producers, highway operators such as the North South Highway (PLUS) and the Lebuhraya Damansara Puchong (LDP) as well as utility companies such as water suppliers.

Will Koh Tsu Koon have the audacity to demand that the WCE project be suspended pending review to

ensure that Malaysia recovers from the pits of the TI CPI or will he chicken-out by shirking his responsibility as the chairman of PEMANDU?

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