

Nothing takes its toll on Samy Vellu

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KUALA LUMPUR: A storm is brewing over the toll rate for the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (Smart).

The rumblings of thunder were first heard on Wednesday when Parti Keadilan Rakyat's youth wing "revealed" that the toll rate had been set at RM2.

Besides that, a challenge was issued to Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu — make all toll agreements public within seven days, or a police report would be lodged to prompt an investigation into how the agreements were drawn up.

Undaunted, Samy Vellu only had harsh words for those who threw him the challenge.

"They can make 1,000 (police) reports, but we do not run this government on police reports.

"In fact, I will lodge a police report against them for trying to pressure me on matters that

have to be decided by the government, not by a political party," he said after launching MIC's national training and employment portal and seminar at the party headquarters yesterday.

Keadilan had claimed that the government and the concessionaire had agreed to the RM2 toll rate on June 2, 2004.

They also claimed that it would rise to a maximum of RM7 within the next 40 years.

Used to the constant pressure he faced due to the toll tariffs over the years, Samy Vellu took it all in his stride.

In fact, he was rather amused by the claims.

"I congratulate Keadilan for their work. They can set up a toll information centre next time and also announce all the toll (rates) on behalf of the government.

"So, I will not make any announcements on the toll. I will allow Keadilan to do it and after that, the DAP," he said sarcastically.

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Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu
Works Minister

no decision yet on the Smart tunnel toll rates.

The RM1.93 billion project was built by Smart Sdn Bhd — a 50:50 joint venture between MMC Corp Bhd and Gamuda Bhd.

From the total, RM1.3 billion was borne by the government for construction of the stormwater tunnel for flood mitigation. The remaining RM633 million was borne by Smart.

The world's first two-in-one tunnel provides an alternative for motorists to escape the infamous Jalan Tun Razak jams to go south, and for those from Seremban heading towards the city centre.

Motorists using the tunnel will also be able to avoid congestion on Jalan Sungai Besi.

The Smart Tunnel was also built to channel excess floodwater away from the city.

On his recent trip to Syria, Samy Vellu said the Syrian government wanted Malaysian expertise to complete the remaining 60km of the Damascus Outer Ring Road (DORR).

He said 40km of the 100km road had already been built by German contractors, but Syria now wanted Malaysians to complete the job.

He said of the remaining 60km incomplete stretch, the Germans had already come up with the design for 40km of the road.

After the Malaysian contractors finish designing the fi-

nal 20km, Samy Vellu said the Malaysian and Syrian governments would sign an agreement to build the remaining 60km of the DORR.

"I believe Malaysia has first-class expertise and infrastructure and we can share it with the Syrians.

"This was a fruitful trip as it fostered good relations between both countries," he said of the three-day official visit to Syria led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi from Feb 25.

Samy Vellu said Syrian President Dr Bashar al-Assad was also seeking Malaysian expertise to build a new international airport on the existing site, low-cost housing and hospitals with 100 beds and 50 beds.

He added that the Syrian government had also discussed the possibility of a Malaysian company building and operating a light rail or monorail system, but it had proven to be too expensive for a private company to bear.