

Jamil Khir says 'unaware' of Perkim road deal
The Malaysian Insider
January 05, 2012
By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5 — Islamic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom said today he was unaware of Perkim's involvement in a RM270 million road construction project, saying he had not heard about the matter before.

Perkim vice-president II Prof Emeritus Datuk Ariffin Suhaimi, 74, and Perkim members Datuk Baharin Baba, 58, and Abas Adam, 60, were charged with CBT on December 27, 2011, involving RM3.7 million entrusted to them as cash consideration for upgrading the stretch of road from Subang Airport to Sungai Buloh Hospital between April 2002 and April 2004.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has not explained the details of the case except to say it is prosecuting the three in the Shah Alam Sessions Court.

"I am unaware about this, I have to check, I have not heard about this," Jamil Khir (picture) told The Malaysian Insider after officiating a function at the Islamic Institute for Understanding (IKIM) here.

The minister said the matter was not within his jurisdiction before rushing off for lunch.

Perkim is a welfare organisation for Muslim converts founded by the country's founding prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in 1960. It is now led by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is the country's longest-serving prime minister.

The first phase of the project was awarded to Perkim (Damansara Utama)-Rira Bina Sdn Bhd JV on August 11, 2003, by the Public Works Department (PWD) and valued at RM130 million, according to the government's Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) website.

The second phase was then awarded on August 2, 2006 for RM139.5 million. The length of the road involved is 13.5km. At the time, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu was the works minister. He held the position from 1995 to 2008. The former MIC president declined to comment for this article.

The PWD has yet to respond to The Malaysian Insider on the details and the status of the project. It was supposed to be completed by October 9, 2008, about three months from its original completion date.

Perkim vice-president I Datuk Seri Dr Shahidan Kassim, who is also in charge of finance, had told The Malaysian Insider he was not aware that a district branch was awarded such a sizeable government project.

The former Perlis menteri besar said on December 29 the divisions are allowed to raise funds, but they are not encouraged to be involved with major businesses.

He said he has just returned from abroad and will be meeting Ariffin to get an explanation, as well as Dr Mahathir regarding the case.

But Perkim chairman Datuk Dr Abu Bakar Shaari said its district branches can have joint ventures such as Perkim Damansara Utama's as long as they are "registered to the government".

Selangor Perkim chairman Datuk Mohd Yasin Taib said that its district branches are allowed to do "whatever activities" to raise funds as long as it is legal. Yet it remains that the scale of the RM270 million road project far surpasses the usual charity fundraising car wash or book sale.

He said he does not know a lot about the Damansara Utama branch and stressed that there are "many" district branches under Selangor.

The question of how Rira Bina became involved and the link it has with Perkim Damansara Utama remains unanswered.

Calls to multiple phone numbers linked to the company went unheeded; some lines have also been disconnected. A call to the Penang branch was answered and the person said someone will get in touch with The Malaysian Insider. It has yet to do so.

According to the CIDB website, the company specialises in road and pavement construction as well as general civil engineering works.

However, Umno Youth information chief Datuk Seri Rizal Merican emphasised that it was lawful for companies to team up with NGOs to undertake government projects, adding that what was important was the quality of the work as well as the delivery.

He also said that if there was a conflict of interest, such partnerships should not be encouraged.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright© 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/jamil-khir-says-unaware-of-perkim-road-deal/>