

Samy: We're only 'tool' of EPU

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KUALA LUMPUR: Irritated and fed up with the constant heckling over the toll increase issue, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu says his ministry is only a "tool" (*alat*) of the Economic Planning Unit (EPU).

"The EPU under the Prime Minister's Department may have to take full charge of all matters related to highway projects in the future," he said.

"I cannot allow my ministry to continue to be the scapegoat ... I did not make any decision on the applications by the (highway) companies.

"All of these (decisions) were made by the EPU. They submit proposals to the cabinet and the cabinet decides.

"But it is this ministry which has always been seen as stupid and heartless. So, I have a new idea, whatever proposals from the EPU, I will object and review."

Samy Vellu was responding to a supplementary question by **Datuk Tan Lian Ho (BN-Bukit**

At the **Dewan Rakyat**

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Gantang), who asked for the rationale of the toll hikes. His reply was met with a noisy response from the MPs.

Opposition Leader **Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur)** then said that since the ministry is only EPU's "tool", the final deciding authority such as the premier should be present to answer the question.

Samy Vellu retorted: "Your question is 150% out of the original question. This is not a political game.

"You think I am scared of the final authorities. I am not scared at all."

There were more boos.

To another supplementary question from **Datuk Kamaruddin Jaffar (PAS-Tumpat)**, Samy Vellu said the government "sympathised" with the people and thus had paid a compensation of RM2 billion to five highway concessionaire companies.

"If the government did not sympathise with the people, then no need (for us to compensate anyone). Just let the people suffer. But we can't do that. We have to take care of the people," he said.