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We will be watching, says PAC

By AUDREY EDWARDS

KUALA LUMPUR: The RM22mil exercise to inspect Putrajaya government buildings for defects will be carefully watched by the Public Accounts Committee. "We will keep an eye on everything," said PAC chairman Datuk Shahrir Samad, "but let the committee do its job." Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu announced the committee's formation on Wednesday. It will comprise engineers and be headed by Auditor-General Tan Sri Ambrin Buang.

Samy Vellu said the inspection would take six months to complete and a proposal on the matter had been submitted to the Cabinet. On Thursday, Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang questioned the hefty cost of the inspection, saying it would burden taxpayers and that the contractors responsible for the defects should pay for it. Shahrir, who was speaking to newsmen yesterday after chairing a PAC meeting, was asked if he thought the amount too excessive. He said he "did not know" but added that there must be professionalism displayed by the committee.

"There needs to be more professionalism and not so much haste in talking about money," he said. "Talk about the work that must be done." On the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) building project, Shahrir said PAC was still dissatisfied even though the building had been completed. "The committee still feels there are questions that need to be asked on the decisions by the Finance and Works ministries. We will continue until we are satisfied. There must be positive changes to how monitoring is done," he said.

He said that PAC would continue to call up relevant parties to appear in front of the committee, adding that it was satisfied with the explanation given by former deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Afifuddin Omar who appeared yesterday. PAC is still dissatisfied over issues like why the selection of the contractor was changed from a tender to direct negotiations, and the problem of reclaiming liquidated ascertained damages (LAD) totalling RM9mil for a delay of 212 days. The committee, he said, was however satisfied with the matter of the Middle Ring Road 2 (MRR2) project.