

# Toll rate raised to offset rise in construction costs

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PULAU REDANG, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the increase in the toll rate, as announced by Project Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan Bhd, was necessary because of the increase in its construction costs.

In addition, he said the company was required to complete the construction of the expressway early.

"Under the concession agreement (awarded in 1988) the company is allowed to increase the toll rates," he told reporters after a tour of Pulau Redang and a visit to the Redang Island Resort Sdn Bhd's project site.

"I think it will not be a burden to those who do not want to travel on the expressway because they can use alternative roads, which are of course much further and can result in higher

maintenance cost for cars."

It was reported that PLUS will increase the toll rate for the completed sections of the North-South Expressway by 2.5 sen per kilometre for passenger cars effective from Jan 1 next year. The current toll charge is five sen per kilometre.

Dr Mahathir said the toll rate in Malaysia was still very low compared with other countries.

"In other countries, expressway users have to pay \$1 for every kilometre they travel and in countries like Japan, they not only have to pay toll but they also have to go through the inconvenience caused by heavy traffic."

He believed that DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang would exploit this as another political issue.

"Not one of his suggestions is good. If he wants

everything cheap, we can ask him to build the road and let him levy the charges."

On the new millionaires in Pulau Langkawi, Dr Mahathir said he did not agree with the way the landowners acquired their wealth because they sold their land.

He advised the millionaires of Pulau Langkawi to invest part of their wealth to ensure that they will continue to earn incomes.

He was referring to the 13 millionaires who acquired their wealth after selling their land.

The latest millionaire on Pulau Langkawi is a woman landowner who sold her two-hectare land for \$1.3 million. The land, acquired by the Langkawi Development Authority, is earmarked for an aviation company.