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Policy reversal on toll-free alternative routes

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Indicating a reversal of policy, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today toll-free alternative routes will no longer be provided where there is heavy traffic volume.

Samy Vellu said the Federal road from Kajang to Seremban would be privatised soon while the stretch from Cheras to Semenyih, via Kajang, had already been privatised.

"Very soon, there will be no alternative toll-free road even to go to Seremban because the old road is going to be privatised," he said.

Motorists now pay RM5.70 to travel from Kuala Lumpur to Seremban on the North-South Expressway.

Asked if such a move would be unjust as there was no alternative toll-free routes, Samy Vellu said: "That is the old decision. The question and provision of having alternative routes for tolled roads may not arise anymore."

He said the Government would be seen to be unfair if it did not take care of its people. What the Government was concerned about was for the safety of road users, he said.

He said with the increase in traffic volume from Kuala Lumpur to Seremban the trunk road would have to be upgraded while PLUS would also need to widen the stretch between both places along its expressway.

He said the stretch from Semenyih to the Kajang interchange, which goes through Kajang town, had also being privatised but the agreement had yet to be signed.

In January 1993, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when asked to comment on the toll being levied on the expressway, said those who did not wish to pay toll could use the alternative routes.

In August the same year, the then Works Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, when speaking on the (then) proposed eastern expressway intended to link Johor, Terengganu, Pahang and Kelantan, also said motorists who thought the toll rate was high, could opt to travel on trunk roads.

Samy Vellu, who was talking to reporters after meeting South Australian Governor Sir Eric Neal, was asked to comment on the proposal to light up the entire stretch of the North-South Expressway.

Samy Vellu said although nothing had been decided yet, certain people had voiced their disapproval when it was reported that toll rates might be increased if the authorities decided to light up the expressway.

"Many have said that they don't need the lights and that they preferred to use the federal routes."

He said stretches that needed to be lighted up are Kuala Lumpur-Seremban-Malacca, Kuala Lumpur-Rawang, Kampar-Ipoh-Kuala Kangsar, Nibong Tebal-Butterworth-Alor Star.

Samy Vellu also said the Cabinet decided today that in future all bridges across highways and the expressway should have a clearance height of at least five metres to allow container lorries to pass through.

The present minimum clearance height is 4.3 metres.

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