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Mahathir-Toll

THERE MAY NO LONGER BE ALTERNATIVE ROUTES FOR TOLLED ROAD, SAYD MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia may one day have only tolled roads with no alternative routes or toll-free roads but the government has not yet decided on the matter.

"Maybe one day we will have no roads except by paying tolls and alternative roads cannot be built or do not exist.

"Then we may have to have tolled roads without alternative roads...but that will be the last resort," he said when asked to comment on Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu's recent statement that legal provisions to provide alternative routes to tolled road "may no longer arise".

Speaking to reporters on his return from Saudi Arabia at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang, near here, he said the government had not decided on the matter.

"We do not have any stand on the matter (so far)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he could not say whether in future the government, for certain, would not be able to avoid building tolled roads.

"If we want to build comfortable roads but not charge tolls, the costs will be too high. We all want good roads but we do not want to pay, that is difficult," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the public did not understand that "actually tolls reduce costs".

"If we use alternative roads, the road is not good and we find the route longer and the damage to vehicle higher. Many people do not take this into account," he said.

He said highways made the journey shorter, safer and more comfortable.

"So we benefit a lot. Although we pay tolls, the tolls we pay are about the same as the losses we suffer using alternative roads, he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were still alternative roads like the ones from Seremban to Klang and from Klang to Kuala Lumpur.

However, he said, some were difficult to negotiate like those passing through estates which were meandering and longer.

He said many people were now using tolled roads because they were faster and more comfortable.

"(They) do not talk about finding alternative roads except the stubborn ones who do not want to pay and make all sorts of excuses. Some do not want to pay at all and are prepared to go to court," he said.

Asked whether road tax would be abolished if there are no alternative routes to tolled roads, he said: "That is a different matter because we provide other services to car owners." -- BERNAMA

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