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Toll roads without alternative routes will be Govt's last resort, PM says

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there may be toll roads without alternative routes in the future, but this will be the Government's last resort.

Dr Mahathir said the Government has yet to decide on the toll roads with no alternative routes or toll-free roads.

Speaking at a media conference upon his return from Saudi Arabia at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang yesterday, the Prime Minister said: "One day we may have no other way but to pay tolls, and the alternative roads cannot be built or do not exist. May be at that time, we have to have toll roads without alternative routes. But that will be the last resort."

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu's recent statement that the Government might not provide alternative roads to toll roads. As of now, he said the Government has not decided to have toll roads without alternative routes.

But he added: "I don't dare to say, in the future, due to certain reasons, we cannot avoid using comfortable roads (toll roads)."

Dr Mahathir said if the Government builds comfortable roads but does not impose tolls, the costs will be too high.

"We all want good roads but we do not want to pay, that is difficult," he said.

"Actually tolls reduce costs. Sometimes people don't understand this. If we use alternative road, the road is not good, it is longer and the wear and tear on the vehicle are greater. Many people do not take this into account," he said. Dr Mahathir 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 with the losses we suffer if we use alternative roads," he said. He said many people are now using toll roads without finding alternative routes except for those who are stubborn. "Some do not want to pay at all and are prepared to go to court."

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

Asked whether road tax will be abolished if tolls are imposed on all the roads in country, Dr Mahathir said: "That is a different matter because we provide other services to vehicle owners."

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