

19 MAR 1998

Link

DR MAHATHIR AND GOH TO OPEN SECOND LINK NEXT MONTH

KUALA LUMPUR, March 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singapore counterpart Goh Chok Tong will officially open the second Malaysia-Singapore road link next month.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu said today the two prime ministers have agreed to jointly open the second crossing on April 18.

"They will open the second link at 9.30am," he told reporters after witnessing the signing of an agreement to privatise maintenance of federal government common-user buildings at the ministry here.

Toll collection for the second crossing, linking Tanjung Kupang in Johor and Tuas in Singapore, was only enforced last Tuesday although it was opened to traffic since Jan 2 this year.

Singapore and Malaysia jointly developed the second crossing with the republic building 0.3km of a two-km bridge at a cost of S\$600 million.

Malaysia built the other 1.7km, including a six-lane highway linking the bridge to the North-South Expressway at a cost of RM1.2 billion.

Asked if the government would review the second crossing toll following protests from haulage companies, Samy Vellu said the rates have already been substantially reduced from the original quantum.

"By using the new bridge, they (motorists) save more (time) than by using the Johor Causeway where the whole journey is between two to three hours. It takes only 20 minutes when they use the second link," the minister said.

Malaysia is charging RM4.80 for cars, RM11.40 for vans and small lorries, RM25.50 for big lorries and trailers, RM4.10 for taxis, RM6.20 for buses and RM1 for motorcycles.

The rates were 25 per cent to 48 per cent lower than those originally proposed in the agreement with the project developer and concessionaire, Linkedua (M) Sdn Bhd.

Singapore's toll charges for the second link are S\$0.50 for motorcycles, S\$2.50 for cars, S\$6 for vans/small lorries, S\$12 for big lorries, S\$2 for taxis and S\$3 for buses. (S\$1 = RM2.27).

Samy Vellu said the second link has proved to be "more convenient, more comfortable, a better highway " besides providing speedier Customs and Immigration clearance and loading and unloading for lorries.

"You tend to make more money than spending a few ringgit (on toll)," Samy Vellu said.

He also said the government has no plans yet to increase the toll rates on the Causeway linking Johor Baharu to Woodlands in Singapore.

Samy Vellu said the government would spend RM40 million to improve the Kulai-Johor Baharu road by constructing more interchanges.

Work on the Tampoi interchange was already in progress, he added. --
BERNAMA

ES rn