

18 APR 1998

Mahathir-Causeway

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CAUSEWAY SHELVED

JOHOR BAHRU, April 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the proposal to build a new causeway to replace the Johor Causeway was shelved because the current economic situation did not permit it.

He said the government had received the proposal from a private Malaysian company but it could not be implemented now because of the economic slowdown.

"We must wait until the situation permits it before considering whether to build the new causeway," he told a joint news conference with Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong after they opened the Malaysia-Singapore second crossing, near here.

Dr Mahathir said the proposal involved the construction of another bridge to replace the Johor Causeway, with its route bypassing Johor Baharu city.

The proposal was made by Dr Mahathir during a visit to Johor in 1996 because the existing causeway could no longer cope with the traffic volume and was also obstructing the flow of water in the strait.

The Johor Causeway, the first crossing linking Malaysia to Singapore, was officially opened in 1924. At that time about 100,000 commuters used the causeway daily.

Asked whether a campaign should be held to encourage the public to use the second crossing, which had received cool response so far, Dr Mahathir said such a campaign was not necessary.

"We feel it is not necessary because normally, when we have a new facility, the public is not so keen on using it in the beginning but finally they will use (it)," he said.

This was the experience of the North-South Highway and the Penang Bridge when they were first completed, he said.

The prime minister also said that there was no possibility of a further toll reduction for the second crossing because the present rates were already far below the rates proposed earlier.

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

A toll of RM1.80 is also imposed on cars crossing Plaza Tanjung Kupang, van and small lorries (RM3.60), big lorries and trailers (RM4.50), buses (RM1.80) and taxis (RM0.90).

The rates are 25-40 per cent lower than that allowed in the original agreement with the project developer and concessionaire Linkedua (M) Sdn Bhd.

The toll imposed by Singapore is S\$0.50 for motorcycles, S\$2.50 for cars, S\$6 for vans and small lorries, S\$12 for big lorries, S\$2 for taxis and S\$3 for buses.

-- BERNAMA

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