

05 APR 1998

Samy-Toll

NO FURTHER REDUCTION IN TOLL RATES ON SECOND LINK

JOHOR BAHRU, April 5 (Bernama) -- There will be no further reduction in the toll rates on the second route linking Tanjung Kupang in Johor and Tuas in Singapore, said Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu today.

"I don't think the charges can be reduced from what they are today," he told reporters after opening the Arulmigu Meenachi Amman Temple in Kampung Oren, Hulu Tiram, near here.

He said Malaysia could allow motorists to use the second route without any charge but then they would still not be able to get into Singapore for free.

"They grumble when it comes to paying their own government but when they enter another country they shut up and pay," he said.

Samy Vellu said it would be a bad policy not to charge motorists because it cost RM1.3 billion to build the second link and there was no other way to get the money back than to collect tolls.

He said it would be inappropriate not to charge motorists for using the second link because it would discourage the private sector in participating in future government's privatised projects.

The second link was jointly built by Malaysia and Singapore, with the latter constructing 0.3km of the of the two-kilometre stretch costing S\$600 million. Malaysia built the remaining 1.7km plus the six-lane road linking it with the North-South Highway at a cost of RM1.2 billion.

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

Cars are also charged RM1.80 for crossing Tanjung Kupang Plaza. while vans and lorries RM3.60, big lorries and trailers RM4.50, buses RM1,80 and taxis RM0.90.

Samy Vellu said the government had already reduced the charges following public complaints and the new rates were between 25 and 48 per cent less than original agreed with developer and concesssioner Linkedua (M) Sdn Bhd.

Asked on the small number of vehicles using the second link because of the high toll rates, he said given time more motorists would use it.

He said that if a lorry had to wait up to five hours at the Johor Causeway to get into Singapore, cost wise the lorry would be paying more than using the second link.

"When we built the Pulau Pinang bridge, everyone was saying that the toll rate was expensive but now millions of vehicles have been using it. The same thing happened with the North-South Highway. So, for how long can they bear using the Johor Causeway," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singapore counterpart Goh Chok Tong will open the second link on April 18. -- BERNAMA
MKO HAR ABG