

PM: We must be fair to those without cars

By NORMAN ONG

SEPANG: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government will have to provide free bus and train services for the lower income group if it has to meet the demand to abolish highway toll.

"That is fair. Those without cars do not benefit (from the highway) but (because) people do not want to pay toll, the Government has to pay compensation (to the concessionaires).

"Why should we provide free roads to those who have cars. They are people who can afford it. There are many others

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whose income is insufficient to buy cars whose means of transportation are buses and trains.

"So the fares of buses and trains should also be abolished. Maybe we should also provide free flights," he told reporters at the KL International Airport upon his return from the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland.

The Prime Minister said this in response to the nationwide protests by the opposition and non-governmental organisations against "unfair" toll.

He said people who did not own cars would be the losers because the money

paid to the concessionaires could be used to build roads in the kampongs.

Dr Mahathir said the Government could reduce road, petrol and other taxes but civil servants' salaries would also have to be reduced.

He reiterated the government's stand that new highways would only be built when the people were ready to pay toll.

He said although the Government was responsible for building roads, the investment was high and if people were unwilling to pay, then it would take a long time to implement such projects.