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Highway

NO OBJECTION TO TOLL COLLECTION, SAYS T'GANU GOVT

KUALA TERENGGANU, Dec 20 (Bernama) -- The PAS-led Terengganu state government today affirmed that it would not object to toll collection for the proposed East Coast Highway if the project is to proceed until Cendering, here.

State Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities and Communications Committee chairman Yahaya Ali said the state government's policy was clear, that it would not object to any projects which provide facilities for the people in Terengganu.

"We (PAS) do not object to the construction of the (highway) project and a survey by the Economic Planning Unit shows that it (the project) is important for people in the state," he said when met after the first state legislative assembly sitting under the new state government, here.

He said the survey also showed that the public agreed to use the highway even if toll charges were imposed.

Newspapers reported yesterday that Prime Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the proposed East Coast highway project from Karak in Pahang to Cendering, would be implemented if the Terengganu PAS state government was willing to allow toll collection over the Terengganu side of the highway.

Dr Mahathir said if the Terengganu government was against the toll collection, then it would have to fund the whole cost of the project over the Terengganu side or pay the toll charges incurred by those using that stretch of the proposed highway.

"If they (Terengganu government) do not want the toll (charges), then the project (Terengganu part) will have to be scrapped," the Prime Minister was reported as saying.

The RM2.8 billion 338km-long highway project was proposed to be constructed over several stages from Karak to Kuantan in Pahang extending to Jabur, Bukit Besi, Ajil and Cendering in Terengganu.

Ground breaking work on both ends of the project was held last month.

"We accept (toll charges for the highway) as it involves a federal government project and the recent abolishment of toll collection on Sultan Mahmud Bridge here has got nothing to do with the highway project," Yahaya said.

He said the issues were different as the Sultan Mahmud Bridge was under the state government jurisdiction compared to the proposed highway, a federal government project.

Yahaya also said all projects approved by the previous state administration would be continued with some adjustments made in accordance with the PAS state government policies.

Meanwhile State Economic Development, Petroleum and Industrial Committee chairman Mustafa Ali said the proposed expansion of the Sultan Mahmud Airport in Seberang Takir, another federal government project, was expected to proceed.

"As far as I know, the project will proceed and I have been informed that former menteri besar (Tan Sri) Wan Mokhtar (Ahmad) has also asked for it to be continued," Mustafa said.

The ground breaking ceremony for the airport expansion project was performed by the Prime Minister last Nov 27.

The RM200 million project involves the construction of a new terminal and extension of the existing runway. It is due for completion within five years.

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