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Samy-Toll

TOLL RATE REVIEW IF DIRECTED BY CABINET, SAYS SAMY VELLU

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 24 (Bernama) -- The RM1.50 toll imposed for cars at the Damansara-Puchong Highway (LDP) will be reviewed if the Cabinet issues a directive for a re-think of the toll rate, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today.

He said the toll rate was fixed by the Cabinet and any change on the rate must also be decided by the Cabinet.

"If the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad decides to slash the rate by 50 per cent, it will be done so but we cannot reduce it by half just because many people want the rate to be 50 sen.

"How can we charge 50 sen, who is going to pay the compensation... if RM1.50 is reduced to 50 sen, the remaining RM1 will have to be borne by the government. The highway concessionaire will not reduce the rate if asked to do so," he told reporters after opening a health camp for women at Pantai Dalam, here.

Samy Vellu was asked to comment on the protests by various groups on the RM1.50 toll charged at each of the four toll plazas along the 40km highway which he will open tomorrow.

With regards to appeals against toll hikes along the North-South Expressway, Elite Expressway, Kesas Expressway and Kulim-Butterworth Expressway, he said they would be brought to the Cabinet's attention in two weeks.

Toll rates for the four expressways will be raised after the Chinese New Year next month.

Dr Mahathir said on Tuesday that the toll rates had to be increased to spare the government from paying 100 per cent compensation to highway operators as provided for in concession agreements.

He said highway users need to pay only 40 per cent of the increase while the government would absorb the remaining 60 per cent.

The government paid about RM200 million to highway concessionaires last year because their requests for toll hikes were rejected.

Asked whether the government would consider extending the concession period in a move to reduce the present toll charges, Samy Vellu said it cannot be done as the concession agreements signed must be honoured.

"If we review the agreements to extend the concession period, banks will immediately withdraw the loans for the concessionaires and will demand for full settlement," he said.

Samy Vellu explained that discussions on highway construction and toll rates were handled by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department and not the Works Ministry.

He said there is a committee to evaluate the project, the amount of money to be invested and loan taken from banks by the concessionaire, interest to be paid and profit margin

He said all these factors were taken into account before deciding on the toll rate for highways.

Samy Vellu also said he ordered to stop the construction of the alternative road through Bandar Sri Damansara for the LDP on Wednesday following protests by a group of residents but now there were requests to build the alternative road.

He also said the highway operator would build five more overhead bridges in addition to the existing five for the people's convenience.

More than 110 people visited the health camp jointly organised by the

wanita wing of the Lembah Pantai MIC division and the Chaudhury Medical Centre.

It is the second health camp held in Lembah Pantai and the seventh to be organised by the Wanita MIC.

-- BERNAMA
AFY DSR TS