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Rates at two tolls to be reduced

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Cabinet has agreed in principle to reduce the toll rates for the Seremban-Port Dickson Highway and the Butterworth-Kulim Expressway, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today.

He said the matter was discussed at today's Cabinet meeting.

He added that he would prepare a working paper detailing all problems faced by both motorists and the concessionaires to be submitted to the Cabinet next week.

Toll increases for the Seremban-Port Dickson Highway were announced by Samy Vellu last Wednesday while rates for the Butterworth-Kulim Expressway went up in March last year.

He said the toll increases at the SPDH and BKE were inevitable as it was provided for in their concession agreements.

"I will be recommending the amount of compensation the Government would have to pay the concessionaires who had sought the Government's financial assistance due to low traffic volume," he said after a visit by Cabinet Ministers led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the KLCC.

The concessionaire for the SPDH is Seremban-Port Dickson Highway Sdn Bhd which built the RM250 million 29.5km highway in 1997 while Konsortium Lebuhraya Butterworth-Kulim Sdn Bhd is the concessionaire for the RM210 million 17km BKE, opened in 1996.

"We cannot abolish the increases in toll rates which had already been imposed as these increases are inevitable.

"However, the Cabinet has agreed in principle to reduce the increased amount in an attempt to get more motorists to use the highway."

However, he said, the quantum would only be decided at next week's Cabinet meeting, and the new rates would be gazetted then.

The whole process, he said, would take up to two weeks from next week's Cabinet meeting and until then motorists would continue paying the increased toll rates.

Previously, motorists paid 80 sen when they entered or left the expressway at Kubang Semang in Penang, and another 80 sen when they exited or entered the toll plaza near Lunas, in Kedah.

From March 1 last year, motorists had to pay an additional 30 sen at the Kubang Semang toll plaza and 20 sen when entering or leaving Lunas.

It was reported that SPDH had projected a yearly collection of about RM28 million but only RM8 million had been collected until now, while the BKE collects about a meagre RM35 per night.

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