

11/04/2000

Terengganu agrees to toll (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Terengganu Pas State Government has agreed to the imposition of toll on the new 338km East Coast highway from Karak in Pahang to Kuala Terengganu.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the rates would be determined later.

He said Menteri Besar Abdul Hadi Awang and State Executive Council members had also agreed to help in the acquisition of land for the RM2.62 billion project.

"The Terengganu Government understands the importance of such a highway and has agreed to the imposition of toll," he told reporters after an hour-long meeting with Hadi, State Executive Council members and Works Ministry officials at his Ministry today.

Samy Vellu gave the assurance that the rates would be "people-oriented" and lower than that imposed along the North-South highway.

"The ministry will be forwarding plans on the project to the State Government soon following which land acquisition is expected to begin," he said.

Samy Vellu had said in December last year that the Cabinet would reconsider the construction of the Terengganu stretch of the highway after the Pas Government had stated that it would not encourage toll collection.

He had said that if the highway was built and the people chose not to use it, the concessionaires would not be able to recover their costs.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had suggested that the State Government subsidise the portion which would run through Terengganu by providing land free of charge to the concessionaire or bearing part of the toll charges.

Alternatively, he had said that the State Government could build the road on its own and impose a toll which it felt was reasonable.

The highway will begin in Karak and go through Mentakab, Temerloh, Maran, Kuantan, Jabur, Bukit Besi, Ajil and Chendering, ending in Kuala Terengganu.

He said the first phase linking Karak to Temerloh in Pahang and Chenderiang to Bukit Besi in Terengganu would begin simultaneously as soon as land acquisition was completed.

The project is expected to be completed in three-and-a-half years.

Meanwhile, Hadi said the State Government would fulfil all responsibilities on its part to ensure the project was carried out smoothly and on schedule.

He said people living along the Chendering-Bukit Payung stretch of the highway would be relocated. The rest of the highway will run through largely plantation and Federal Government land.

"We have made preparations and assure the people that their lives will not be affected in any way."

On how the people of Terengganu felt about the State Government's decision to accept the tolled highway, he said they were satisfied and understood the importance of such a project.

"There is always an alternative route and no one is forced to use the highway," he said.

On the party's stand with regard to the alleged assault of two Umno members by a Pas member in Temerloh on Friday, he said it was a personal matter between them.

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