

MCA's Tee Yong claims credit for new Plus deal
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MCA Young Professionals Bureau chairperson Chua Tee Yong expressed happiness that his proposal on a government takeover of highway concessionaires and restructuring of their contracts was taken into consideration.

In a statement today, Chua said he had proposed to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak back in 2009 that federal government investment arm Khanazah Nasional Bhd or EPF take over the companies.

Chua said the premier agreed to undertake a review and he also made proposals to the Dewan Rakyat in 2009.

"I am happy that my proposal raised in Parliament in 2009 which was also brought up by MCA ministers during cabinet meetings, was taken into consideration," said Chua.

Chua was commenting on the announcement yesterday by Plus Highway over a new supplementary deal inked with the federal government.

He said that on top of the freeze on toll charges increases until year 2015, the federal government will save RM6.5 billion in compensation.

Chua said this showed that the government is concerned with the impact of toll charges on the public.

"The announcement shows that the government is committed to reducing the burden of the people," he added.

Nationalisation not sustainable

On Plus Highway's commitment to spend RM800 million annually on routine, heavy maintenance and upgrading works, Chua argued that this showed that nationalisation of the highways was not sustainable.

"Besides that, UEM and EPF also said that toll increases will be lowered from 10 percent every three years to five percent at the same intervals," he said.

Using a one-way trip from Kuala Lumpur to Johor Bahru as an example, Chua argued that if the new deal was not hatched, toll charges would cost RM79.77 in 2036 when the concession period ends.

Under the new deal, toll charges are set to cost RM57.77 in 2036 for the same trip.

"Although there was a reduction in the toll rate increase, I hope UEM and EPF will relook the rate if the financial condition of Plus further improves.

"I believe that toll rate should be based on requirements but not on a fixed basis in the long run. With this new arrangement, it is beneficial to EPF and EPF contributors as well," he added.