

## **Gov't: Toll rates up so we can use funds on other things**

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Toll rates for more than 10 highways will go up drastically this Thursday because the government decided to no longer pay compensation to concessionaires to delay the scheduled hikes.

The Works Ministry said the funds are better used for development projects, instead of compensating concessionaires in accordance with concession agreements.

The government has paid about RM1.5 billion as compensation for not allowing toll rate hikes since 2008, it said.

“The government believes that the funds used as compensation to delay the toll hike are better used for development projects, which have multiplier effects on the economy and benefit all Malaysians.

“For example, we can use it to pave existing roads, provide better health facilities, build more hospitals, schools and so on,” it said.

This comes after the government cut RM300 million off the Health Ministry’s RM27 billion budget earlier this year, following the fall in oil prices, but the ministry said this will not affect healthcare standards.

Universiti Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC), which falls under the jurisdiction of the Education Ministry, reportedly had its budget slashed to RM387 million from RM510 million last year.

Toll rates are going up by up to 80 percent, depending on vehicle class and entry/exit points.

The Works Ministry said the new rates will only affect intra-city tolls, and would not affect travel between cities.

Toll rates for buses also remain at existing rates to encourage public transport use and reduce urban traffic, it said.

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