

How secret is LDP toll concession agreement?

NST- 10/1/2007

PUTRAJAYA: Action can be taken against Parti Keadilan Rakyat for breaching the Official Secrets Act if the "secret" toll concession agreement it purportedly obtained is classified under the Act.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said a check would be made first to verify if the government's agreement with Lingkar Trans Kota Sdn Bhd (Littrak), operator of the Damansara-Puchong Highway (LDP), was OSA-classified.

"If it is, we can take action. We can also check on how Keadilan

obtained the document," the prime minister told reporters yesterday after the ground-breaking ceremony for the National Cancer Institute here.

He was asked about Keadilan's claim that it had obtained a copy of a 1996 concession agreement, which the party was using to organise protests against the Jan 1 toll hike for the LDP.

The LDP is one of five highways in the Klang Valley on which toll rates were increased.

On why government subsidies and toll collection for the LDP had

to continue despite Littrak's net profit of RM80 million last year, Abdullah said: "We have had a lot of discussions with them, and we thought it was the reasonable thing to do. If you have some more information, let us know."

Abdullah reiterated that the toll hike was necessary and that highway concessionaires had justified their reasons to the government.

"They had made projections on traffic volume in years to come, and now, today, we have to consider the situation. If the situation today requires us to act by increas-

ing the toll, we have to. Facilities like these (highways) need to be paid for if we want to enjoy using them."

He said highway operators submitted the amount of toll collected to the government as part of their justification for a toll hike.

"What they have proven to us is that a hike is necessary," Abdullah said.

Asked if the amount of toll collected should be revealed to the public, he said people could check the companies' reports as they were public documents.