

Pak Lah: It's reasonable, and Govt can't subsidise everything

By **MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR**
and **A. LETCHUMANAN**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: The Government has come out in defence of the increased toll rates, which have been criticised by several quarters, including former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said a lot of discussions were held with the concessionaires before the decision was made.

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"We thought it was the reasonable thing to do," Abdullah told reporters after officiating at the groundbreaking of the National Cancer Institute here yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the Government could not go on subsidising everything.

Based on the submission of the concessionaires' toll collection, the Government had no choice but to increase the rates, he said.

Abdullah added: "They proved to the Government that toll rates needed to be increased."

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DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD
BADAWI

Government could not deny that if the situation warranted a toll increase, it had to be given.

"Otherwise we would have to

subsidise the toll. How much can we continue to subsidise? Everything must be subsidised, how can that be?

"We are trying to reduce the subsidy amount. The amount is huge. If you want to use such facilities, you pay for them."

On Monday, Dr Mahathir suggested that highway concessionaires reveal how much they had collected in tolls to date.

In New Delhi, Samy Vellu said the Cabinet had to give the green light first for the highway concessionaires to release the details on the toll col-

lection and the traffic volume.

"I will raise it in the Cabinet and, if it is approved, the concessionaires will be asked to provide the details," he told reporters after presenting a paper at the three-day 5th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention.

He said the concessionaires had submitted to the Government details of their toll collection as well as their repayments to the banks.

On the calls for a review in the concessionaire agreements, he said the Government would have to pay compensation if the agreements were reviewed.