

Toll-free roads not possible - Mahathir

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BALI, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says it is not possible to have highways without the imposition of toll collection.

The Malaysian Prime Minister revealed that he was against the toll-free highways pledge in the Pakatan Harapan election manifesto.

"We made the manifesto thinking we would not be the government. Now we are the government and this manifesto is a big burden.

"But, at that time, I was against it *la* . I know, to have a freeway ... you cannot. The only way to have freeways and no toll is to raise the price of petrol," he told Bernama and RTM at the conclusion of the inaugural ASEAN Leaders Gathering here Thursday.

The meeting, held on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, carried the theme 'Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Overcoming Development Gap through Regional and Global Collaborative Actions'.

This is Dr Mahathir's second visit to Indonesia since becoming the prime minister for the second time after Malaysia's historic general election in May, and the first engagement at the ASEAN level ahead of the 10-member group's summit next month in Singapore.

Elaborating on the toll matter, he asked who would maintain the roads or build new roads if the government does away with toll collection.

"You tell the private sector to do the roads. They want to make money, but if you don't have

toll, how can you make money?"

Dr Mahathir said that in England, there are no toll roads but the country imposes a heavy tax on petroleum and when the petroleum price goes up, the tax goes up even higher.

"So, they use that money. But if you get the money out of the sale of petroleum people who do not use the highway also have to pay. But here (highway) users pay. This is our belief. The users pay; those people who are not using (the roads), why should they pay?"

Dr Mahathir has said before that the PH government will need to review its pledges as some of them would impose great losses if implemented.

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