

Understand costs for government to take over highway concessions - Dr M

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KLANG, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the public to understand the costs that have to be borne by the government to take over highway concessions from the concessionaires.

He said this was important because the process of acquiring highway concessions involved the people's money, collected via taxes.

“The government needs to buy a highway, but with whose money? It’s the money from tax collected from the people...Then the roads, which must be maintained from time to time, (costs for them) will also be borne by the government and no longer by the concession companies.

“This also means that some of the taxes we collected must be used to maintain the roads, depriving the government of money for other projects that are also necessary,” he said at a press conference after officiating a Metrod Holdings Bhd plant here, today.

Dr Mahathir said this in response to public criticisms after the government issued a statement on talks with Gamuda Berhad to take over four highway concessions that the company had a majority stake in, namely the Shah Alam Expressway (KESAS), Damansara-Puchong Expressway (LDP), Sprint Expressway and the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART Tunnel).

Among the criticisms were that the government did not take over the highway concession from PLUS Malaysia Bhd and for introducing ‘congestion charges’ instead of the outright abolition of tolls.

According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister’s Office on Saturday, the government intends to abolish the existing toll mechanism when it successfully takes over the concession of the four expressways.

Based on the statement, a 'congestion charge' will be introduced where users will need to pay tolls

at the existing rates for six 'peak hours' of the day.

During the off-peak period between 11 pm and 5 am, usage of the expressways will be free.

For other 'normal' times, users will enjoy a 30 per cent discount from the existing rates.

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