

The Star : Higher toll on six highways but no change on four

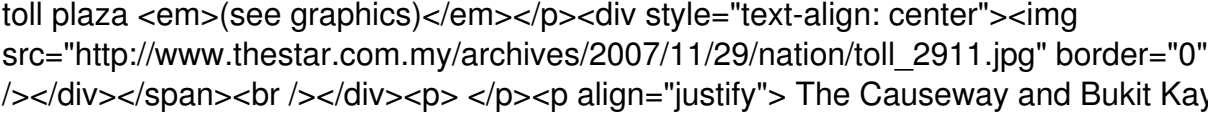
Written by Administrator

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KUALA LUMPUR: The toll on six highways will be raised by between 7.69% and 50% on Jan 1 but rates on four major ones, including the closed-toll portion of the North-South Expressway (NSE), will be maintained.

The highways where toll will be increased are the Seremban-Port Dickson Highway (SPDH), the North-South Central Link (Elite), the Butterworth-Kulim Expressway (BKE), the Second Link, the New North Klang Straits Bypass (NNKSB), the two ends of the NSE at the Johor Causeway and the Bukit Kayu Hitam toll plaza (see graphics)



The Causeway and Bukit Kayu Hitam are the only two open toll portions of the NSE. A closed-toll system is where road users pay according to the distance travelled while the open concept charges a fixed fee regardless of mileage.

Elite is operated by Expressway Lingkar Tengah Sdn Bhd, BKE by Malaysia Mining Corporation and NNKSB by Syarikat Konsesi. Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong. The NSE, SPDH and the Causeway are operated by PLUS Highway.

Works Minister Datuk Seri Samy Vellu said that the rates were decided on during the Cabinet's meeting yesterday.

Maintaining the toll on the four expressways will cost the Government about RM242mil.

For the Ampang-Ulu Kelang Elevated Highway, the Government will pay the concessionaire RM26mil, the North South Highway RM145mil, the Sprint Kerinchi and Damansara Link RM32mil and Penang Bridge RM39mil.

The Government will also pay RM75mil for 2008 for the second as well as the last instalment to Syarikat Konsesi Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong for reducing toll rate from RM2.10 to RM1.60 and another RM27mil for not increasing the toll for the NNKSB for 2005 to 2007, he said.

The compensation is only an estimated figure and will depend on actual traffic usage, he said.

The reason for increasing toll rates at some of the highways was because there was low traffic, Samy Vellu said.

The toll charge increase ranges from 10 sen to RM10.70, according to the ministry.

The 50% toll hike affects car users at the NNKSB, which will see an increase of 10 sen to 40 sen depending on the type of vehicle while the highest amount of increase is at the Second Link, ranging from 30 sen to RM10.70.

On whether the decision not to raise toll rates at the four highways had to do with the coming general election, Samy Vellu said that if that was the reason, the Government would have decided not to increase on all highways.

The compensation payout is only for 2008 and the ministry has been asked to work out the cost for 2009 to ensure that the rates would not affect the public adversely, Samy Vellu said.

On whether toll rates would increase again in 2009, he said it would be determined at a later time.

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