

Plans to ease burden of tolled highway users

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KUALA LUMPUR: Good news may be in store for those who are financially burdened by the toll fees they have to pay daily as they travel to and from work.

A study by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is expected to be ready in three months, said Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor yesterday.

Speaking after launching the Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway (Duke), Shaziman said the findings would be presented to the cabinet.

"Among the options is the possibility of imposing a spe-

cial rate. The rate will be strictly for working days only and during stipulated times.

"But we also need to evaluate the government's financial ability to fund such a move if toll charges are not raised. EPU has to come up with other methods and they need to consult the highway concessionaires. I am sure other options can be explored and discussed further by the cabinet," he said.

He said the move would help those who had no choice but to use the tolled highways on a daily basis, for instance, those working in Putrajaya but staying in the city.

Shaziman also reminded highway operators to constantly carry out maintenance works.

He noted that minor floods

often occurred on highways, resulting in the closure of lanes and traffic congestion.

Shaziman said highway operators should also work closely with the Ministry's slopes engineering department to ensure the stability of slopes on its highways.

"I prefer to have constant monitoring of these slopes rather than acting only when something happens, especially during the rainy season when landslides tend to occur. Modern technologies should be put to full use to detect any movement in the ground," he said.

The Duke highway, which connects Duta and Ulu Klang, was officially opened to motorists at 6pm yesterday.

It cuts travelling time between the two areas from 30

minutes to nine minutes, and the Batu toll plaza also features a hi-tech Touch 'n Go self-service top-up lane, the first of its kind installed at a toll plaza in Malaysia.

With the system, motorists can reload their Touch 'n Go by inserting RM5, RM10 or RM100 notes into the machine. The process takes only about 15 seconds.

Touch 'n Go Sdn Bhd chief commercial officer Khair Ul-Anwar Mohd Yusoff, who was also present at the launch, said the self-service top-up lane was being operated on a trial basis for the next three months.

"The top-up machine will make it convenient for motorists to reload their Touch 'n Go as it operates round the clock," he said.