

> TOLL RATE FOR SMART MOTORWAY

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Ministry to send proposal to Cabinet in 2 weeks

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THE Works Ministry will submit the proposed toll rate for the motorway tunnel of the Kuala Lumpur Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART) to the Cabinet in two weeks' time.

Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the Cabinet paper will list out, among others, the construction cost of the tunnel, the borrowings involved, payments to contractors, maintenance cost and the company's financial situation.

"We will put in the suggested rate (in the Cabinet paper)," he told a news conference after visiting the SMART motorway in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The RM1.93 billion project is built by Syarikat Mengurus Air Banjir dan Terowong Sdn Bhd (SMART) — a 50:50 joint venture between MMC Corp Bhd (MMC) and Gamuda Bhd.

From the total, RM1.3 billion is borne by the Government for construction of the stormwater tunnel for flood mitigation. The remaining RM633 million is borne by SMART, who is also the toll concessionaire for the motorway.

Samy Vellu said the project is now 94 per cent completed.

The 6km double-deck motorway will be open for traffic by end of March this year, while the stormwater tunnel is expected to be ready by June.

According to the minister, there will be one-month free ride on the motorway starting March 30.

On whether the toll for SMART motorway will be the most expensive in Malaysia, he said it is a matter of taking into consideration the amount of money spent, the payback period and its importance as a travel route.

"But it is not a North-South Expressway rate. This is a special rate," he added.

Meanwhile, Gamuda executive director Datuk Azmi Mat Nor said the toll concession of the SMART motorway is expected to contribute positively to the company's financial performance in the long term.

"Like other highways, the traffic is expected to be slow for the first few years, then



Samy Vellu (second from left) checking on the progress of work on the SMART tunnel yesterday



The 6km double-deck motorway will be open to traffic by the end of March

it will build up. It depends on traffic. It will take time," he said.

Azmi said while looking out for more projects abroad, the company is also studying opportunities for tunnel construction in other parts of Malaysia.

The SMART motorway, which is only accessible to cars due to the 2m high tunnel, is expected to reduce the travelling time be-

tween Sg Besi and the city centre from 30 minutes to five minutes.

It offers a direct, alternative access to the city centre for some 200,000 vehicles that currently travel daily from Sg Besi to the city centre.

The upper deck of the motorway tunnel is for south-bound traffic, while the lower deck is for city-bound traffic.