

Fiscus can't sustain e-toll uncertainty: Gordhan

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The fiscus could not sustain any further prolonged period of uncertainty over the manner in which the R20bn cost of the Gauteng freeway would be funded by the South African National Road Agency (Sanral), Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan said on Friday.



(Image: GCIS)

He appealed to motorists to "do the right thing" and pay the e-tolls, which are due to be implemented 30 days after government gazettes the new tariff structure.

Addressing a joint meeting of Parliament's finance committees on the medium-term budget policy statement, Gordhan castigated the recent statements by the leader of the Opposition To Urban Tolling Alliance (OUTA) as "extremely irresponsible".

OUTA has threatened court action over government's decision to proceed with e-tolling but Gordhan said this would delay finalisation of the funding of the debt for months, and potentially several years if the court process proceeded to the appeal court and even higher courts.

"That uncertainty cannot be allowed. We cannot within this fiscal framework provide backup for these sorts of propositions on a completely nebulous basis," Gordhan said.

Proposals 'very reasonable'

"We cannot hang this cloud over our heads which means that for the next two years, potentially, we must start providing on the budget for the repayment that Sanral is making on this debt."

Gordhan accused the leader of OUTA of not telling the truth as the inter-ministerial committee led by Deputy President

Kgalema Motlanthe had had extensive consultations with the organisation and other stakeholders. OUTA knew what was on the table. The proposals were "very reasonable" the minister said and were open for further discussion during the 30-day period allowed for consultation after the tariffs were gazetted.

Gordhan said statistics derived from the gantries on the highway showed that people would not be paying more, on average, than R150 or R100 a month. He said inflated numbers were being put out to the public.

"We believe the public should not be discouraged from doing the right thing," Gordhan told MPs.

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