

MAHATHIR-PAY

BM

EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AT 11 P.M., SEPT. 4

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KUALALUMPUR, SEPT. 4 (BERNAMA) -- RESIDENTS IN MALAYSIA MUST BE PREPARED TO PAY ROAD TOLLS IF THEY WANT THE GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE THE ROADS BUILT IN PRE-WAR DAYS WITH +REALLY TOP CLASS+ ONES, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID.

IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BUILD EXPRESSWAYS TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND PROVIDE COMFORT FOR ROAD-USERS WITHOUT TOLL COLLECTION, HE ADDED.

+WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GET THE MONEY IF HE DON'T HAVE TOLL. IF HE ASK THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DO IT THEY MUST BE PAID,+ HE SAID IN A HAL EHWAL SEMASA (CURRENT AFFAIRS) INTERVIEW OVER RTM TONIGHT.

HE SAID THAT ROAD-USERS IN MALAYSIA WERE FORTUNATE IN THAT THERE WERE COMPARATIVELY FEW CARS AND THEY WERE ONLY REQUIRED TO PAY A TOLL OF ABOUT TWO OR THREE SEN PER 1.6KM ON A TRIP BETWEEN SEREMBAN AND KUALA LUMPUR.

IN JAPAN, ROAD-USERS PAID NEARLY 30 SEN PER 1.6 KM. FOR USE OF THEIR EXPRESSWAYS AND THEY HAD ABOUT 80 MILLION CARS, HE ADDED. --

ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT COULD IMPOSE PETROLEUM TAX INCORPORATING TOLL PAYMENT, HE SAID THIS WOULD BE AN EASIER WAY BUT UNFORTUNATELY PEOPLE WHO DID NOT USE THE EXPRESSWAYS WOULD ALSO HAVE TO PAY.

+IF THE PEOPLE ARE WILLING, WE CAN RAISE THE TAX BUT DON'T MAKE NOISE.

+WE RAISE THE TAX ON PETROLEUM AND ALL THE PEOPLE CLAMOUR WHY THEY HAVE TO PAY TAX.

+ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE PEOPLE SO WANT, THE GOVERNMENT WILL STOP CONSTRUCTION OF ALL EXPRESSWAYS. BUT DON'T COMPLAIN WHEN WE CANNOT MOVE BECAUSE OF TRAFFIC JAMS,+ HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NOW COLLECTION OF TOLL, IT WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO MEET THE COST OF BUILDING THE ROADS AND PROVIDING OTHER FACILITIES. -- MORE

THE GOVERNMENT HAD ESTIMATED IN 1980 THAT IT WOULD COST \$6,000 MILLION TO BUILD AN EXPRESSWAY FROM BUKIT KAYU HITAM TO JOHOR BAHRU.

HE ADDED THAT IT WOULD TAKE 40 YEARS TO RECOVER THAT AMOUNT AT CURRENT TOLL RATES.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID NO ONE WAS WILLING TO BUILD ROADS FROM TOLL COLLECTION BECAUSE THE AMOUNT WAS SO SMALL COMPARED WITH THE ACTUAL COST.

ON TOLL COLLECTION AT THE JOHOR CAUSEWAY, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD SPENT MILLIONS OF RINGGIT TO BUILD IT AND BECAUSE OF THAT COLLECTION WAS NECESSARY.

COMMENTING ON THE DIFFERING OPINIONS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL AND JOHOR GOVERNMENTS OVER THE MATTER, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED IT WITH JOHOR MENTERI BESAR DATUK AJIB AHMAD WHO HAD AGREED TO THE IMPOSITION OF THE TOLL. -- MORE

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ASKED WHETHER TOLL COLLECTION WOULD GUARANTEE, THAT THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE GOOD ROADS, HE SAID 'IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO COLLECT ENOUGH MONEY TO BUILD ROADS THAT WERE REALLY 'FIRST CLASS'.

IN THIS 'CONTEXT HE SAID, THERE HAD BEEN ADVICE FROM OTHER CONSULTANCY BODIES NOT TO BUILD ROADS THAT WERE TOO 'COSTLY AND TO CUT COST.

HE EXPLAINED. THAT ROADS INCLUDING THE SEREMBAN-KUALA LUMPUR HIGHWAY AND THE EAST-WEST HIGHWAY WERE SPOILT 'BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT' HAD TRIED TO REDUCE EXPENSES.

DATUKSERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE EAST-WEST HIGHWAY SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BUILT BY CUTTING MOUNTAINS AND BUILDING ALONGSIDE THEM 'AS WAS DONE BUT WITH BRIDGES AND THROUGH TUNNELS;

HOWEVER, IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE COST THREE TIMES MORE BY THE SECOND METHOD 'AND SO BECAUSE OF WANTING TO SAVE ON COST, BECAUSE COLLECTION IS LITTLE, WE HAD TO BUILD ROADS USING A METHOD WHICH IS NOT SO GOOD, ' HE ADDED.

-- BERNAMA