

0885

U E722 AAE
MAHATHIR-AUSTRALIA

BM

86
KOTA BAHARU, JUNE 29/(BERNAMA) -- SEVERAL AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE RESPONDED NEGATIVELY TOWARDS THE DEATH SENTENCE ON TWO AUSTRALIANS FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PULAU PINANG BECAUSE OF VESTED INTERESTS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

COMMENTING ON REPORTS THAT SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS AND THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN AUSTRALIA DISAGREED WITH THE DEATH SENTENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT FOR THE SAKE OF OBTAINING NEWS MATERIAL, SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS SPONSORED THE TRIP TO MALAYSIA OF A RELATIVE OF ONE OF THE CONVICTED AUSTRALIANS.

HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER OPENING THE FIRST GENERAL MEETING OF THE KOK LANAS UMNO DIVISION NEAR HERE THAT THE NEWSPAPERS EXPECTED SOME RETURN FROM THE MONEY THEY SPENT.

KEVIN BARLOW, 28, A WELDER FROM PERTH, AND BRIAN CHAMBERS, 29, A BUILDING CONTRACTOR FROM SYDNEY, WERE SENTENCED TO DEATH ON AUG 1 LAST YEAR BY THE PULAU HIGH COURT FOR TRAFFICKING IN 179GM OF HEROIN AT THE BAYAN LEPAS AIRPORT.

THE STATE PARDONS BOARD REJECTED THEIR APPEAL FOR CLEMENCY ON JUNE 21 THIS YEAR.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO WAS IN AUSTRALIA RECENTLY, ADDED THAT DURING HIS STAY THERE, HE FOUND THAT MOST AUSTRALIANS, IN FACT, AGREED WITH THE SENTENCE. -- BERNAMA

2251MST 29 06 86