

U E004 AAE  
 MAHATHIR-HIGHWAY  
 BM

MELAKA, AUG 13<sup>87</sup> (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY CHALLENGED AN OPPOSITION PARTY TO PROVE ITS CLAIM THAT CERTAIN PEOPLE HAVE PROFITED THROUGH FRAUDULENT MEANS IN THE AWARDING OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE PRIVATISATION OF THE NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY PROJECT.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE AWARDING OF THE CONTRACT HAD CLOSELY FOLLOWED SET PROCEDURES AND THERE WAS NOT A HINT OF FRAUD AS ALLEGED.

HE EXPLAINED AT LENGTH THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD PRIVATISED THE HIGHWAY PROJECT BECAUSE OF THE HIGH COST OF CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE HIGHWAY AND HAD IMPOSED TOLLS TO BE FAIR TO THE PEOPLE WHO DID NOT USE IT.

THE GOVERNMENT COULD BUILD THE HIGHWAY BY ITSELF AND NOT COLLECT TOLLS BUT THEN, IT WOULD HAVE TO INCREASE THE VARIOUS TAXES AND THE PETROL PRICE TO MEET THE CONSTRUCTION COST AND THIS WOULD NOT BE FAIR TO THE PEOPLE WHO DID NOT USE THE HIGHWAY, HE SAID.

+THE ACCUSATIONS THAT I HAD RECEIVED MONEY FROM THE PRIVATISATION OF THE HIGHWAY PROJECT ARE OUTRIGHT LIES,+ HE SAID WHEN OPENING THE AIR KEROH-SENAWANG HIGHWAY AT THE 51KM. -- MORE

U E991 AAE  
 MAHATHIR-HIGHWAY 2 MELAKA

THE 62.6KM STRETCH COSTING \$258 MILLION IS PART OF THE NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY.

WHILE DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS SPEAKING, 40 DAP MEMBERS LED BY PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL LIM KIT SIANG LINED THE HIGHWAY NOT FAR FROM THE DAIS, DISPLAYING BANNERS ALLEGING FRAUD IN THE PRIVATISATION OF THE HIGHWAY PROJECT.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO SAID THAT THE NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY HAD TO BE BUILT AS THE PRESENT ROAD SYSTEM COULD NO LONGER COPE WITH THE VOLUME OF TRAFFIC AND MORE MODERN VEHICLES. IT WAS ALSO TO ENSURE A FASTER AND SAFER ROAD SYSTEM.

HE CRITICISED THE PARTY WHICH HE SAID APPEARED TO BE WORKING FOR THE GOOD FOR THE PEOPLE BUT WAS IN FACT USING THE HIGHWAY PROJECT SOLELY AS A POLITICAL ISSUE AFTER FAILING FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS TO GET ELECTED TO RULE THE COUNTRY.

HE ADVISED THOSE WHO OPPOSED THE PRIVATISATION OF THE HIGHWAY PROJECT NOT TO STAND IN THE PATH OF PROGRESS TO THE EXTENT OF ROBBING THE PEOPLE OF THE CHANCE TO ENJOY THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD RESULT FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. -- MORE

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U E992 AAE  
MAHATHIR-HIGHWAY 3 MELAKA

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR URGED THE PEOPLE NOT TO VIEW THE HIGHWAY SOLELY AS A ROAD ON WHICH TOLLS MUST BE PAID BUT AS AN ECONOMIC EFFORT WHICH COULD BENEFIT EVERYONE.

HE SAID CONSTRUCTION OF THE HIGHWAY CREATED JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE ROAD CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AS WELL AS ENCOURAGED THE PEOPLE TO TRAVEL AND EVERY SEN THEY SPENT CONTRIBUTED TO THE LIVELIHOOD FOR OTHERS.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO PRIVATISE THE HIGHWAY PROJECT BECAUSE REVENUE FROM COLLECTION OF ROAD TAX AND OTHER RELATED TAXES WAS ONLY ENOUGH TO PAY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS WITHIN THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

THE HIGHWAY PROJECT WAS PRIVATISED BECAUSE THE COMPANY HANDLING IT, FOR PROFIT PURPOSES, WOULD RUN IT WELL AND THE PEOPLE WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE 40 PERCENT INCOME TAX COLLECTED FROM THE COMPANY.

THE PEOPLE SHOULD DISMISS THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE HIGHWAY COULD BE USED FOR FREE, HAVING NOT PAID TOLL BEFORE, BECAUSE THEY HAD ACTUALLY BEEN PAYING IN THE PAST THROUGH VARIOUS TAXES, HE SAID.

THOSE WHO DID NOT WANT TO PAY TOLL COULD STILL USE THE EXISTING ROADS BUT THEY WOULD END UP SPENDING MORE BECAUSE OF THE FURTHER DISTANCE TO BE TRAVELLED USING THE EXISTING ROADS AND MAINTENANCE OF THEIR VEHICLES, HE ADDED. -- BERNAMA

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