

PM: We won't bow to such threats

By AZRAN AZIZ

PEOPLE should not hold the Government to ransom to achieve what they want, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"I have explained that the Government would not bow to any aggression," he added, when asked to comment on a demonstration by Cheras residents on Friday night.

He said the Government usually entertained appeals and applications from the public but that it must be done through proper channels.

"But by holding demonstrations to pressure the Government and also threaten not to support the Government if the toll rates are not reduced, the chances of getting a reduction are nil," he added.

Dr Mahathir dismissed

suggestions that Cheras residents opted to hold demonstrations as a last resort as their appeals through various channels had failed.

"What appeal? I have not received any appeals from them," he added.

"The protesters aired their grievances to others. They spoke to Lee Lam Thye (DAP deputy secretary-general). They should ask him to solve the problem."

Asked on a memorandum seeking a reduction in the toll rates by Sungai Besi MCA, Dr Mahathir said he had yet to receive it.

"If they have sent me a memorandum, they should stop the people from holding the demonstrations," he said.

"But I don't think the MCA division there was involved in the demonstra-

tions."

Dr Mahathir said if the toll rates were reduced now, the Opposition would say that the reduction was a result of the demonstrations.

"They will boast to people saying that they were the ones who championed the cause. They will use the issue to fish for votes," he added.

Asked if there was a possibility of talks between the affected residents and the relevant authorities to find an amicable solution, Dr Mahathir said: "It can be done. But if they want to hold the Government to ransom, organise demonstrations to pressure the Government, then it is not proper."

"If they stop all these, the Government may consider a reduction," he added.

Meanwhile, MCA presi-

dent Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said a vast majority of the people do not condone the demonstration on Friday night.

"The people should remain calm and not take the law into their own hands. The Government will not make a decision for the time being to review the toll charges," he said.

He, however, added that the issue would be looked into seriously by all component parties of the Barisan Nasional.

Dr Ling was speaking to reporters after attending the ground-breaking ceremony of the Rawang-Seremban railway double track in Seremban yesterday.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Suleiman Mohamed issued a stern warning against those who created social disorder on

the Cheras toll issue.

He said the Government would not hesitate to take action if there was a disruption to social order in the area but did not elaborate.

"This is part of development and there is now no need for a two-hour traffic jam, it may be felt that the toll is high but the Cabinet has already made a decision," he said.

Dr Suleiman was speaking to reporters yesterday after opening a new classroom at the Sekolah Agama Pulapol at Jalan Semarak.

He said that residents should not get caught in the DAP's emotions as the party was out to politicise the issue.

"The DAP is trying to encroach into the city and is using the toll issue as a political ploy," Datuk Suleiman said.