

Dr M: Govt won't bow to threats

By Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Government will not bow to threats and the use of force by any quarter to resolve the Jalan Cheras toll issue, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the Government was willing to consider requests or appeals from the people based on what the Government could do.

Dr Mahathir said those who demonstrated last night should not have resorted to such action and should not have threatened not to vote for the ruling party if the toll was not reduced.

"Therefore, if they do not vote for the Government, there is no possibility at all of reducing (the toll rate)," he told a press

conference after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party headquarters here.

He was commenting on last night's demonstration by over 1,000 people at the Cheras toll plaza to protest against the Sept 1 imposition of toll.

(Light vehicles are charged \$1 per entry and \$2 for heavy vehicles. Motor-cyclists are exempted.)

The demonstration, however, turned unruly. Police had to fire teargas and baton-charge three times at the protesters to disperse them.

Dr Mahathir said there was tension during the demonstration because the issue had been politicised.

Asked whether the protesters had resorted to the demonstration as a last

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resort, Dr Mahathir said he had not received any appeal from the people.

"I have not received any appeals ... they resorted to demonstrations, they spoke to (DAP deputy secretary-general) Lee Lam Thye ... ask Lee Lam Thye to resolve (it)," he added.

On whether he had received a memorandum from the Sungai Besi Barisan Nasional division appealing for a reduction in the toll rate, Dr Mahathir said he had not, and added that the division was not involved in the demonstration.

It was reported yesterday that the division had sent a memorandum to Dr Mahathir appealing for a reduction as the charges were a financial burden.

Asked whether there was any possibility of a

reduction, Dr Mahathir said if the rate was reduced, those who took part in the demonstrations would say it was done following their acts.

He said the opposition would then claim credit and would ask the residents to vote for them.

However, he said, the Government was prepared to have discussions, provided all forms of threats were removed.

In Seremban, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said after launching the dual-railway track project between Seremban and Rawang, that the Government was discussing the Cheras residents' memorandum on the Cheras toll.

The MCA president said the MCA was also discussing the matter.