

TOLL-MAHATHIR

BM

90 (P)
KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT 9 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER ~~DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD~~ SAID TODAY THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO HELP RESOLVE THE CHERAS TOLL ISSUE, AND AT THE SAME TIME WARNED CERTAIN GROUPS AGAINST TURNING THE PROBLEM INTO A RACIAL ISSUE FOR POLITICAL GAIN.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE RESPONSIVE IF THE PEOPLE MADE USE OF THE PROPER CHANNELS, DID NOT DEMONSTRATE AND DID NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE EXPLOITED BY POLITICIANS,

+WE WILL NOT ACCEPT THEIR WANTING TO HOLD THE GOVERNMENT TO RANSOM,+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER PRESENTING PRIZES TO WINNERS OF THE BAKTI WALKATHON AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE HERE.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THERE WERE SIGNS OF CERTAIN GROUPS BEING INCLINED TOWARDS EXPLOITING THE RACIAL NATURE OF THE SITUATION IN THE INTERESTS OF POLITICS.

+I AM SADDENED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ALLEGATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IMPOSED THE TOLL IN CHERAS ON PURPOSE BECAUSE IT WAS A LARGELY CHINESE AREA,+ HE SAID. -- MORE

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+THIS IS DANGEROUS. DO NOT TOY WITH RACIAL ISSUES,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO MAINTAIN CORDIAL INTER-RACIAL RELATIONSHIP BUT SOME POLITICIANS, WHOM HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY, HAD ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF IMPOSING HIGH TOLL RATES IN CHERAS BECAUSE THE AREA WAS POPULATED BY CHINESE.

+IF THERE IS A LAW THAT ALLOWS US TO DETAIN (PEOPLE WHO USE RACIAL ISSUES), WE WILL DETAIN THEM,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID IT WAS THE DUTY OF THE POLICE TO DETAIN PEOPLE WHO, IN THEIR OPINION, HAD COMMITTED AN OFFENCE, REGARDLESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL BEING A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT OR A TAN SRI.

COMMENTING ON THE DETENTION OF FOUR DAP MEMBERS, INCLUDING SUNGAIBESI MP TAN KOK WAI, UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT (ISA), IN CONNECTION WITH A DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE CHERAS TOLL, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE DETENTION IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. -- MORE

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ENCIK TAN AND THE THREE OTHERS (TWO OF WHOM HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED) WERE HELD UNDER SECTION 73 OF THE ISA WHICH ALLOWED THE POLICE TO DETAIN THEM FOR TWO MONTHS FOR QUESTIONING.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, AS HOME MINISTER, CAN ISSUE AN ORDER FOR THEIR FURTHER DETENTION AFTER THE EXPIRY OF THE TWO MONTHS.

+I ALSO CANNOT DO ANYTHING IF THE POLICE WANT TO RECOMMEND THEIR RELEASE OR DETENTION,+ HE SAID,

ON SEPT 1, TOLL WAS IMPOSED AT THE RATE OF \$1 FOR LIGHT VEHICLES AND \$2 FOR HEAVY VEHICLES AT THE 5.5KM (ONLY SOUTH-BOUND TRAFFIC) AND 8KM (ONLY CITY-BOUND TRAFFIC) OF JALAN CHERAS. MOTORCYCLISTS ARE EXEMPTED FROM HAVING TO PAY THE TOLL.

ON TALK THAT A DEMONSTRATION WAS BEING PLANNED AT THE TOLL PLAZA IN JALAN PAHANG TOMORROW, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WOULD NOT BRING ANY GOOD.

+WE ARE THANKFUL THAT THE COUNTRY IS PEACEFUL BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THESE PEOPLE ARE NOT HAPPY WITH PEACE,+ HE SAID. -- BERNAMA