

# Cheras toll rates may be reviewed

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. —** Senior Government leaders today gave further hints that the Government is willing to review rates at the Cheras toll plaza if the aggrieved parties used peaceful means to solve the problem.

Heading the list was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who said that the Government would not be forced into doing anything to help resolve the grievances of affected commuters unless the solution was sought through consultations.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was prepared to consider reducing the toll rates, just as it did in the case of the Jalan Kuching toll several years ago.

"But there was no demonstration over the Jalan Kuching toll, and that was why the Government considered reducing the rates."

He added that meetings to discuss the toll issue could be held on condition that there were no demonstrations.

Speaking to reporters at the Kuala

Lumpur International Airport in Subang before leaving for a four-day official visit to South Korea, Dr Mahathir said the power of the people should be exercised through the electoral process and discussions, and not through violent demonstrations.

He said the meetings on the New Economic Policy and the proposed Education Bill were examples of consultation undertaken by the Government with various interest groups "like civilised people".

"Do not try to throw stones, (resort to) violence, stir racial issues ... this is not good (because) we want to look after racial harmony.

"Such action can be done in another country but not in Malaysia. The toll matter is the toll matter, not a racial matter."

His deputy, Encik Ghafar Baba, said the Government would study the contract with Teratai K.G. Sdn Bhd, the toll operators, to ascertain whether the toll rates could be reduced by 50 per cent.

He said the study would enable the Government to determine how far it was bound by the contract.

"I will study the agreement to see how far the Government is hindered by the agreement in our efforts to resolve the issue."

Encik Ghafar was speaking to reporters after opening a national seminar on family development here this morning.

"As the Prime Minister had said, we do not want to hold talks under pressure because this will only encourage others to resort to demonstrations in future."

He also advised the protesters to refrain from further demonstrations and

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# Ghafar: It is a small matter

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violence over the issue.

He said such acts must stop so that negotiations could be held to resolve the issue.

"In the past, we have faced bigger issues such as on religion, language, education and economy which had been resolved amicably through consultation and negotiation.

"In comparison, this toll issue is a small matter."

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, who is also MCA president, said the party would raise the toll issue at tomorrow's Cabinet meeting. It would request a 50 per cent reduction in toll rates and seasonal passes for residents in the area.

The MCA presidential council met today and decided that its four Ministers would raise the issue at the Cabinet meeting with a view to finding an amicable and speedy solution.

Datuk Seri Dr Ling said the party also felt that residents in the areas should be sold season passes, where they would pay a certain sum for use of the highway for a month instead of paying each time they passed the collection booths.

He said the MCA Ministers would also request the building of alternative routes to be maintained by the Government or the private sector in order to reduce the travelling time for residents in the various housing estates in Cheras.

He was confident that a solution could be found as the Cheras residents had been staying there long before the toll booths were erected.