

MAHATHIR-TOLL

(e)

JITRA, SEPT 20 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY INVITED AN OPPOSITION-SPONSORED ANTI-TOLL COMMITTEE TO MANAGE AND MAINTAIN TOLL ROADS IN THE COUNTRY BUT WITHOUT COLLECTING TOLL FROM ROAD-USERS.

+WE WILL SEE IF THE COMMITTEE IS ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE ROADS IN GOOD CONDITION WITHOUT ANY ASSISTANCE,+ HE SAID WHEN LAUNCHING THE +TURUN KE BENDANG+ (TO THE PADI FIELD) PROGRAMME OF THE NATIONAL PADI AND RICE AUTHORITY (LPN) AT SEKOLAH MENENGAH BATU 20, MEGAT DEWA, NEAR HERE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE HAD RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE, HEADED BY DATUK HARUN IDRIS OF PARTI SEMANGAT 46 AND SYED HUSSEIN ALI OF PARTI RAKYAT MALAYSIA, ASKING THE GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW COLLECTION OF ROAD TOLL IN THE COUNTRY.

SAYING THAT TOLL AND TAX WERE SIMILAR, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT REALISED THAT WITHOUT COLLECTING TOLL AND TAXES IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE COMFORT OF THE PEOPLE. -- MORE
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THEREFORE, WHEN THE GOVERNMENT BUILT GOOD ROADS AND HIGHWAYS, IT WAS ONLY PROPER THAT THE PEOPLE HELPED BY PAYING TOLL AND TAXES. WITH THE TOLL AND TAXES, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO BUILD MORE ROADS AND HIGHWAYS, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HIS OFFER TO THE COMMITTEE WAS +SERIOUS+.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS LATER, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT INTEND TO REPLY THE LETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE.

IN HIS SPEECH, THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO CRITICISED THE CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF PENANG (CAP) WHICH HE SAID PLAYED POLITICS AND DID NOT FULFILL ITS RESPONSIBILITY OF PROTECTING THE CONSUMER.

HE CITED AN EXAMPLE, OF CAP'S INVOLVEMENT IN WHAT HE SAID WAS DEFENDING THE COUNTRY'S ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS WHEN THE MORE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF A POSSIBLE INCREASE IN THE PRICES OF GOODS FOLLOWING A HIKE IN FUEL PRICES WAS NEGLECTED.

HE SAID THE ASSOCIATION SHOULD REMIND CONSUMERS TO BE PREPARED TO FIGHT ANY INCREASE IN THE PRICES OF ESSENTIAL GOODS AND NOT MEDDLE IN MATTERS IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH. -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SUGGESTED THAT CAP ADHERE TO ITS PROPER ROLE AND NOT PLAY POLITICS WHICH HE SAID DID NOT BENEFIT CONSUMERS.

REPLYING TO QUESTIONS FROM REPORTERS LATER ON THE PACT AMONG PARTI SEMANGAT 46, PAS AND DAP, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WAS A WONDER HOW A BIG PARTY SUCH AS PAS COULD ALLOW PARTI SEMANGAT 46 TO CONTEST IN THE LARGE NUMBER OF MALAY-MAJORITY CONSTITUENCIES IT HAD CONTESTED IN PAST ELECTIONS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS ONLY PROPER THAT PAS HAD A BIGGER ROLE IN THE PACT AND NOT JUST GIVE IN TO PARTI SEMANGAT 46. AND IF THE PACT SHOULD WIN THE ELECTION, THAT IS IF IT CAN WIN, (PAS PRESIDENT) FADZIL NOR SHOULD BECOME THE PRIME MINISTER AND NOT (PARTI SEMANGAT 46 PRESIDENT) TENGKU RAZALEIGH HAMZAH, HE ADDED.

ON THE INCREASE IN MAS' FARES TO INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT ALLOWED THE RISE OWING TO THE INCREASE IN FUEL PRICES.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT MADE A DECISION ON MAS' REQUEST FOR AN INCREASE IN FARES ON DOMESTIC FLIGHTS AS WELL.