

PM to panel: See if you can maintain highway without toll

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PENANG, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, challenged the anti-toll committee today to take over the Government's responsibility of maintaining the highways from Bukit Kayu Hitam to Johor Baru without collecting toll.

"I will hand over the responsibility to them the moment they agree (to maintain the highways)," the Prime Minister told reporters after attending the 19th anniversary of the National Padi and Rice Board (LPN) at Sekolah Menengah Batu 20 in Kodiang, Kubang Pasu.

Saying that toll and tax were similar, he said the Government realised that without collecting toll and

taxes it was impossible to provide infrastructure.

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 Govern-

ment would be able to build more roads and highways, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the anti-toll committee was formed by two prominent opposition members — Parti Semangat 46 Selangor chairman Datuk Haji Harun Idris and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) president Dr Syed Hussin Ali — to seek the removal of all toll charges.

He said the two sent a letter to the Cabinet yesterday. He said they were not sincere but were only fishing for votes.

"It is easy to form a committee ... but they expect the Government to adhere to their ridiculous demands.

"How is the Govern-

ment ever going to get funds to maintain roads and highways built at high costs if we do not collect toll?" said Dr Mahathir.

Earlier, he told thousands of farmers attending the celebrations that the Government was satisfied with LPN's progress.

He said there were now fewer problems faced by padi farmers.

Twenty-four farmers from several states were presented with LPN vouchers for a free six-month supply of rice (54kg each month) by the Prime Minister.

In return, a group of farmers presented Dr Mahathir with a *terendak* (farmer's hat).