

# Dr M: Govt will cushion impact of oil price surge

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By HARDEV KAUR

THE Government will raise domestic oil prices gradually and even then only if the need arises due to dramatic increases in world crude oil prices. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this will ensure the Malaysian public is not burdened by sharp oil price rises.

He told reporters in Changloun, Kedah, yesterday that even if the Government were to raise domestic oil prices, these will not be at the same rate as increases on world markets. Crude oil prices on world markets have risen from US\$14 a barrel to an average of US\$33 a barrel at present following Iraq's August 2 invasion and subsequent annexation of Kuwait.

Despite these increases, the Prime Minister said, the Government will continue to ensure the prices of essential items do not rise, causing hardship to the people. He said there is no need

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THE Government will ensure that the dissolution of Parliament for the coming general election will be done in accordance with the law, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday in Changloun.

He was responding to news reports quoting DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang as saying that the Prime Minister would be ridiculing Parliament if he dissolved the house after notice of sitting on October 15 was sent to Members of Parliament. — Bernama

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for traders to raise prices of goods. He noted here that when oil prices were on the decline, traders did not reduce the prices of their goods.

Even though the price of crude oil on world markets has risen by a large margin, the domestic increase has only been 6 per cent. As such, traders need not push up the prices of goods and services.

Under the circumstances, the Prime Minister said, consumer associations should help the Government explain the present situation to traders and consumers. He added, however, that consumer associations were not doing anything.

Asked whether the Government will consider increasing the number of controlled items to prevent price increases, he said this is difficult as "traders, too, need to make profit". In con-

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trolling items, the Government has to ensure the cost to traders does not rise. "We need to look after the interests of traders, too," he added.

Earlier, in his speech to a gathering, the Prime Minister said the Government does not discriminate against any race in the country. Minority races such as the Thais and the Portuguese are not neglected. They are accorded the same privileges as the other Malaysians and are even allowed to buy Amanah Saham Nasional.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir reiterated that Malaysia is a peaceful country. He said the armed

forces, including the police, help ensure peace and security for all.

Asked about the PAS, he said the party is only a "shadow of its past". Its leaders no longer adhere to the party's stated principles of not cooperating with non-Muslims. Today, PAS is working closely with such non-Muslim parties as the DAP.

He added that certain PAS leaders had allowed the party to be manipulated by the DAP and Semangat 46 in recent by-elections. The party has, for example, surrendered its Kijal constituency to Semangat 46 and has agreed to give up more of its

former constituencies to that party.

The Prime Minister, who is also Umno president, called on PAS members to reconsider their support for the party, adding that Umno's doors are always open to them.

He later joined a large gathering for Friday prayers at the Padang Perahu mosque near Koding. During his two-day visit to the state and his parliamentary constituency, Kubang Pasu, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir thanked voters for returning him to the seat in four consecutive elections.

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