

# PM: Government won't approve any unjustified toll increase

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Government will not approve any toll increase which is not justified, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said although in its agreement, concessionaire Projek Lebuh raya Utara Selatan (PLUS) had the right to ask for an increase in toll rates every three years, this had to be negotiated.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked by reporters to comment on PLUS' proposal to increase the toll rate for the North-South Highway by 2.5 sen per kilometre from Jan 1, upon his return from a visit to South Africa and Namibia.

He said that any request for a review of the toll charges must be justified. Although the Government had conceded that PLUS has the right to request for a review of the toll charges, any increase must be negotiated, he said on arrival at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang.

PLUS, which last raised the toll rates in 1993, is seeking to increase the toll from 7.5 sen per kilometre now to 10 sen per kilometre.

Asked by reporters to comment on the allegations by Tenaganita, a non-governmental organisation, on inhumane treatment of illegal foreign workers held in the Semenyih detention camp, Dr Mahathir said he had received a report and

explanations on the matter.

But if there are quarters who are not happy, the Government is willing to carry out an impartial investigation, he said.

He said the report he had received was from the Home Ministry agencies and whether "they are biased or not, I do not know".

"But I am satisfied that the inmates were originally undernourished people. They came here without valid documents and had to be detained... they may have died because of their poor health... I do not know."

Asked whether foreign missions of the detained workers could complain to him, he said they could file official complains.

To a question on the Barisan Nasional's chances in the Gua Musang by-election, he said that many leaders of Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) were now aware that Pas had made use of them to ensure its victory in the general election.

The Prime Minister said this caused many S46 leaders and members to leave the party, like in the case of former Gua Musang S46 division secretary Zakuan Taib.

On Wednesday, Zakuan joined Umno and pledged to give his full support to the BN candidate Datuk Hussein Ahmad in Tuesday's Gua Musang parliamentary by-election.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said S46 had initially thought that it could make use of Pas and DAP but what happened was that Pas and DAP made use of S46.

"Many S46 leaders have now come to realise this... it is better if we admit we are wrong and correct our mistake," he said.

The Gua Musang by-election is a straight fight between Hussein and S46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

Dr Mahathir said S46 members had realised that they were not getting anything out of Tengku Razaleigh's struggle.

"It is not possible at all for him to do something. The victims are those represented by S46 because the party cannot do anything. They (S46) cannot get help from the BN."

He said S46 also could not depend on Pas for help because the latter would betray it.

Dr Mahathir said it was possible for the BN to win the by-election.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on Tengku Razaleigh's application to the Kota Baru High Court to quash the Election Court's decision on Aug 1 annulling the result for the Gua Musang seat in the general election last April 25.

He said: "That is his problem. If the law says the elec-

tion (in Gua Musang) can be stopped, so be it."

However, he said, the election would have to be held at a later date and Tengku Razaleigh's action was merely "postponing the day of reckoning".

On calls from the opposition, especially the DAP, that voters should pick opposition candidates in the Gua Musang and Bagan by-elections because the BN already had many seats, Dr Mahathir said it was the opposition's style to complain when the BN was doing something.

"But when they do something, they claim it is a matter of principle. We also uphold principles. If something is right, we accept. Not like them, who refuse to accept when the court's decision is not agreeable to them," he said.

He also said local newspapers gave a great deal of publicity to statements or allegations by certain opposition leaders like Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang and DAP Socialist Youth chief Lim Guan Eng.

"Although there are not many of them, I notice that newspapers carry many reports on Guan Eng and Kit Siang everyday. Kit Siang calls for this, Guan Eng calls for that... almost as if there are 10 voices.

"When BN MPs speak, there are no reports at all in the newspapers."