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 KUALA LUMPUR, FEB 17 (BERNAMA) — DATUK LSERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY PORTS WERE THE +LIFE-LINE+ OF THE NATION AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO DISRUPT THEM. THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID ANY THREAT OR ACTION AFFECTING THEM WERE AIMED AT UNDERMINING THE ECONOMY OF THE NATION AND CAUSING DIFFICULTIES FOR THE PEOPLE.

HE SAID ANY ACTION AFFECTING THE PORT SERVICES WOULD RESTRICT AND DELAY THE ENTRY OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AND THIS WOULD CAUSE INFLATION.

+SUCH ACTION ARE IRRESPONSIBLE ACTS AND THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT VIEW LIGHTLY SUCH ATTITUDES,+ HE SAID TO REPORTERS AFTER OPENING A SYMPOSIUM ON NATIONAL HIGHWAY PROGRESS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLANS ORGANISED BY THE ROAD ENGINEERING ASSOCIATION OF ASIA AND AUSTRALASIA HERE.

HOWEVER, HE DECLINED TO COMMENT FURTHER ON THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE PUTTING LOCAL DEFENCE CORPS MEMBERS ON STANDBY IN PORT KLANG AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE FOLLOWING THREATS OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY PORT WORKERS UNIONS. — BERNAMA MORE 1315/1B

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THE PORT KLANG AUTHORITY STAFF UNION, HARBOUR WORKERS' TRADE UNION, SENIOR OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION (SOA) AND THE PORT ANCILLARY SERVICES HAVE THREATENED TO TAKE INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE AIRLINES EMPLOYEES UNION IN ITS DISPUTE WITH MAS.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CRITICISED THE UNIONS FOR BEING ARROGANTS BECAUSE OF THEIR AFFILIATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION SO MUCH SO AS TO WANT TO SABOTAGE THE NATION'S ECONOMY.

FOR EVERY LITTLE THING THEY WANTED TO USE THREATS AND THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT ALLOW THIS, HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT ALLOW ANYONE IN OR OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY TO DESTROY THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE UNIONS HAD ADMITTED THAT THEY THREATENED TO RESORT TO INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE ITWF. — BERNAMA MORE 1320/1B

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THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE THAT THE PORT UNIONS HAD MET THE ITWF REPRESENTATIVE FOR ASIA, ENCIK DONALD UREN, WHO NOT ONLY PROMISED TO DISRUPT THE NATION'S TRADE RELATIONS BUT ALSO TO ENCOURAGE INDUSTRIAL ACTION BASED ON WORKERS SOLIDARITY, HE ADDED.

HE SAID THE ITWF WAS CONTROLLED BY THE BRITISH AND +WE ARE AWARE OF THE EFFECTS ON THE BRITISH ECONOMY AS A RESULT OF ACTIONS BY WORKERS UNIONS THERE.+

+NOW THEY WISH TO EXTEND THEIR POWERS FROM THAT COUNTRY TO THIS COUNTRY.

+I AM SAD THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY WHO CALL ON THEIR FORMER +ORANG PUTIH TUAN+ TO DESTROY THE COUNTRY,+ HE SAID.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DECLINED TO ELABORATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S WARNING THAT IT WOULD RETALIATE AGAINST ANY FOREIGN ORGANISATION OR COUNTRY WHICH WANTED TO DESTROY MALAYSIA'S ECONOMY. — BERNAMA MORE 132EX1B

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+WE MUST STRIVE TO DEFEND OUR NATION FROM ANY FORM OF IMPERIALISM AND THE ITWF THREAT THROUGH LOCAO UNIONS IS A NEW FORM OF IMPERIALISM,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED THE WORKERS UNION MOVEMENT IN THE COUNTRY AND THEIR SALARY CLAIMS BUT THEIR ACTIONS MUST BE LEGAL.

UNIONS WHICH SUPPORT ILLEGAL ACTION WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE ONES AND THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT BE TOLERANT TOWARDS THEM.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT PREVENT ANY UNION FROM AFFILIATING WITH FOREIGN BODIES BUT THEY MUST USE THEIR FREEDOM IN THIS COUNTRY TO REJECT ANY DIRECTIVE THAT COULD DESTROY THE NATION.

ON MAS, HE SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH ITS DOMESTIC SERVICES SINCE THEIR RESUMPTION.

HOWEVER, HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICES WOULD BE RESUMED AS THIS DEPENDED ON THE MAS ENGINEERS AND THE STAFF SITUATION. — BERNAMA 1327/1B