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KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 29 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD NEVER MADE A TOTAL REJECTION OF THE CUEPACS' CLAIM FOR SALARY INCREASE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS.

THIS WAS EVIDENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE TO PREPARE A CABINET PAPER ON ALL ASPECTS OF A REVIEW OF THE SALARIES AND SCHEMES IN THE CIVIL SERVICE, HE TOLD REPORTERS AT THE KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN SUBANG ON HIS RETURN FROM A 20-DAY VISIT OF THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES AND AUSTRIA.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK MUSA HITAM ANNOUNCED RECENTLY THAT A CABINET PAPER ON SALARIES WAS BEING PREPARED AND WOULD BE TABLED AT A MEETING OF THE CABINET NEXT MONTH AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER RETURNED FROM HIS TRIP ABROAD.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR TRADE UNIONS TO GIVE TOP PRIORITY TO THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE NATION'S FINANCIAL POSITION IN PETITIONING FOR HIGHER SALARIES.

+I BELIEF CUEPACS LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE, AND SURELY THEY WILL NOT WANT TO SEE THIS COUNTRY GOING BANKRUPT,+ HE SAID. --
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO MEET CUEPACS LEADERS BUT +I DO NOT WISH TO COMMIT MYSELF AT THE MEETING.+

HE SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONSIDER ALL THE CLAIMS FROM THE CIVIL SERVANTS AS THIS WOULD IMPOSE A TOTAL STRAIN ON THE NATION'S FINANCES.

+I BELIEVE CUEPACS IS A RESPONSIBLE TRADE UNION WHICH ALWAYS GIVES IMPORTANCE TO THE NATION'S WELFARE. IT IS NOT LIKE THE MINE WORKERS UNION IN BRITAIN. CUEPACS LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE LEADERS,+ HE SAID.

REPLYING TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT GIVE AN ASSURANCE THAT THE CABINET PAPER WOULD BE READY AND DISCUSSIONS OF IT COMPLETED BY MAY 15.

CUEPACS HAD DECIDED THAT IF ITS CLAIM FOR BETTER SALARIES AND SCHEME OF SERVICE FOR ARTISANS WAS NOT ENTERTAINED BY THEN, IT WOULD ORGANISE PICKETTING AND SUBSEQUENTLY DISTRIBUTE SECRET BALLOTS TO MEMBERS OF ITS AFFILIATES TO DECIDE ON FURTHER INDUSTRIAL ACTION. --
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HOWEVER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID, WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE MATTER OF A SALARY CLAIM WAS WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO MEET ALL OF THE CLAIM IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT NATIONAL INCOME.

+IF ONE SECTION IS PREPARED TO SURRENDER ITS SHARE TO ANOTHER, I FEEL THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM BUT THEN GIVEN THE PRESENT SITUATION NO ONE IS PREPARED TO DO SO.

+THE NATIONAL FUNDS ARE NOT GOVERNMENT MONEY BUT THE MONEY OF THE PEOPLE AND NATION ENTRUSTED TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE AND COUNTRY.

+THIS IS NOT MY MONEY. I DON'T EVEN TAKE MUCH OF IT,+ HE SAID.

-- BERNAMA

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