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UMNO-CUEPACS
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KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT 29 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY REITERATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BOW TO THREATS FROM ANY QUARTER, INCLUDING CUEPACS.

THE UMNO PRESIDENT TOLD THE PARTY GENERAL ASSEMBLY HERE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED FOR THE THREATS MADE BY CUEPACS, WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO LAUNCH A NATIONWIDE PICKET ON TUESDAY TO BACK ITS CLAIMS FOR A SALARY REVISION FOR CIVIL SERVANTS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT BY GOING AHEAD WITH THE PICKETING THE GOVERNMENT SERVANTS WHO WERE CUEPACS MEMBERS WOULD SHOW THAT THEY WERE UNGRATEFUL FOR WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD DONE FOR THEM.

HE WAS, HOWEVER, CONFIDENT THAT THE CUEPACS MEMBERS WHO WERE UMNO MEMBERS WOULD IGNORE THE THREATS AND CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR CONFIDENCE IN AND SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

HE ALSO REITERATED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO MEET THE CUEPACS LEADERS OVER THE SALARY CLAIMS +AS LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS UNDER THREAT.+ -- MORE
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+IF THEY WISH TO HAVE TALKS, THEY SHOULD NOT ISSUE ANY THREATS THAT HAVE POLITICAL OVERTONES,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS BEEN CONSIDERATE AND APPRECIATED THE PROBLEMS FACING THE WORKERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE LOWER GROUPS.

BUT, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY WAS NOT TO ITS EMPLOYEES ALONE BUT TO ALL GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY AS WELL, INCLUDING THE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN WHO HAD A TOUGHER TIME DEALING WITH THE PRESSURES OF LIFE THAN GOVERNMENT WORKERS.

HE SAID THE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN HAD NO SUCH BENEFITS AS A FIXED MONTHLY SALARY, PENSION OR ALLOWANCES.

AND WITH THE DECLINE IN THE PRICES OF THE PRIMARY COMMODITIES AND UNCERTAIN FISH CATCHES AND INCOME, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO GIVE MORE ATTENTION TO THESE GROUPS WHICH HE SAID WERE +LIVING FROM HAND TO MOUTH.+ -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO THE PLIGHT OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS, 1,200 OF WHOM IN PULAU PINANG HAD BEEN RETRENCHED RECENTLY BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC RECESSION.

HE ALSO COMPARED THE SALARIES OF GOVERNMENT SERVANTS IN THE LOWER GROUPS WITH THEIR PRIVATE SECTOR COUNTERPARTS, SAYING THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES WERE NOT ONLY EARNING MORE BUT ENJOYED SUCH BENEFITS AS LIFE-LONG PENSIONS.

+WHAT MORE DO GOVERNMENT SERVANTS WANT? WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE GOVERNMENT CHANNELLING PART OF THE COUNTRY'S INCOME TO THOSE WHO ARE MORE IN NEED -- THE FISHERMEN, THE HAWKERS, THE FARMERS?+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE REGRETTED CUEPACS' INGRATITUDE, ADDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S GOOD TREATMENT WAS BEING RECIPROCATED WITH THREATS TO PICKET AND STRIKE AND TO WITHDRAW SUPPORT FOR THE BARISAN NASIONAL.

STRESSING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BUDGE FROM ITS STAND UNTIL THE THREATS WERE WITHDRAWN, HE SAID THAT EVEN IF THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF ITS EMPLOYEES IT WOULD STILL COMMAND THE BACKING OF THE FARMERS AND THE FISHERMEN. -- BERNAMA