

Mahathir to meet Cuepacs leaders

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad expressed his appreciation today to Cuepacs and the five National Joint Council for calling off its planned picket.

The Prime Minister said that he would meet Cuepacs leaders "anytime when I'm free."

Asked by reporters at Parliament House if the Government was hopeful of a solution to the deadlock, he said: "The Government is always hopeful in any talks."

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam said he was glad that the picket had been called off.

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"I'm obviously happy with what I consider as the second step in our approach and my call for a cooling off period."

"I'm sure with goodwill and sincerity as well as willingness by both parties to see industrial peace and stability we will achieve success in the third and final step."

"I consider the final step that will lead to Cuepacs calling off the strike plan (for Jan. 15) would be based on the understanding that would be achieved during the talks," he said.

Datuk Musa added that goodwill and sincerity "obviously existed" after his

for both parties — including trade union and political leaders — to tone down their statements.

Asked what solution was in sight, Datuk Musa said:

"I would not like to add to what I've already said because speculations would only add to more speculations and create unnecessary misconceptions."

Datuk Musa attributed the present success to restraint exercised by all parties concerned.

"To me this element of restraint is crucial," he said.

Wanita Umno leader Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz said that the solution to Cuepacs demand could be

achieved with rational and calm thinking.

Umno Youth leader and Agriculture Minister Anwar Ibrahim said that the movement would hold a meeting with Cuepacs. The date has not been fixed.

Congratulating Cuepacs president Ahmad Nor for calling off the picket, he said the Umno Youth Exco was happy with the decision.

Education Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he was happy that the spirit of *musyarah* and willingness to find a solution still existed among union leaders and the Government.