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(P)

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 14 (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE PREROGATIVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO MAKE PUBLIC THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON THE \$2.5 BILLION BUMIPUTRA MALAYSIA FINANCE (BMF) LOANS SCANDAL, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE GOVERNMENT, BEING THE MAJOR SHAREHOLDER OF BANK BUMIPUTRA MALAYSIA BERHAD (BBMB), THE PARENT COMPANY OF BMF, HAD DIRECTED IT TO LOOK INTO THE LOANS SCANDAL, HE SAID.

+BUT THE MANAGEMENT OF THE BANK STILL RESTS WITH THE MANAGERS OF BBMB;+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER ATTENDING A LUNCHEON AT +KEYAKI+, A JAPANESE RESTAURANT AT THE PAN PACIFIC HOTEL HERE.

AS SUCH, HE SAID, +I SUPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE A SAY ALSO+ IN THE DECISION WHETHER THE REPORT SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC.

+WE CAN'T JUST PASS IT (THE DECISION WHETHER TO MAKE THE REPORT PUBLIC) ON TO THE BANK AND MAKE IT THEIR RESPONSIBILITY,+ HE ADDED.  
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HOWEVER, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD STILL HAVE TO BE ADVISED BY THE BANK BEFORE COMMITTING ITSELF TO ANY DECISION.

+OF COURSE IT'S ONLY AN ADVICE. IT'S NOT A DIRECTIVE TO US. WE DECIDE,+ HE SAID.

ASKED WHETHER THIS MEANT THAT IT WAS STILL THE GOVERNMENT'S PREROGATIVE IN DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO MAKE THE REPORT PUBLIC, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID: +YES.+

HOWEVER, HE SAID HE HAD NOT RECEIVED THE REPORT YET, ADDING: +IT'S A REPORT TO THE BANK. SO, I'LL WAIT FOR THE BANK TO GIVE IT TO ME.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE REPORT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A VERY BULKY ONE, OVER 1000 PAGES, AND +I'M LOOKING FOR THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.+ -- MORE

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ASKED WHETHER HE AGREED THAT THE REPORT SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC AS EXPRESSED BY SEVERAL QUARTERS, INCLUDING AUDITOR-GENERAL TAN SRI AHMAD NOORDIN ZAKARIA WHO HEADED THE COMMITTEE, HE SAID HE HAD NOT SEEN THE REPORT AND DID NOT KNOW ITS CONTENTS AND AS SUCH COULD NOT COMMENT.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO DID NOT DISMISS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE REPORT WOULD BE PRESENTED TO THE CABINET.

+WELL, I SUPPOSE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET MIGHT BE INTERESTED,+ HE SAID WHEN POSED WITH THE SUGGESTION.

ALSO PRESENT AT THE LUNCHEON HOSTED BY SERI PACIFIC CORPORATION (SPC), OWNERS OF THE HOTEL, WERE DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, SPC CHAIRMAN DATUK ABDUL RAHIM ABDUL RAHMAN AND OTHER BOARD DIRECTORS.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS WIFE WERE EARLIER GIVEN A TOUR OF THE VARIOUS OUTLETS IN THE FIVE-STAR INTERNATIONAL HOTEL WHICH COMMENCED BUSINESS YESTERDAY. THESE INCLUDED THE 24-HOUR +SELERA COFFEE HOUSE+ AND +HAI TIEN LO+, A CHINESE RESTAURANT. -- BERNAMA

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