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 KUALA LUMPUR, OCT 18 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD RECEIVED A REPORT FROM INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF POLICE TAN SRI HANIFF OMAR THIS MORNING ON THE HOLDING OF A DOCTOR AND HOSPITAL ASSISTANT AS HOSTAGES BY SIX PRISONERS IN PUDU PRISON HERE. HE SAID THE POLICE AND PRISON AUTHORITIES WERE DIRECTING OPERATIONS TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO HOME MINISTER, TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER CHAIRING AN UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL MEETING AT MENARA DATUK ONN HERE THAT HE NEVER THOUGHT SUCH AN INCIDENT COULD OCCUR AS SUCH AN EVENT HAD NEVER TAKEN PLACE IN THE COUNTRY.

ASKED WHETHER HE HAD MADE ANY PROPOSALS TO RESOLVE THE MATTER AFTER READING THE REPORT, HE REPLIED: +THIS IS UNEXPECTED.+

DR RADZI JAAFAR, A SKIN SPECIALIST FROM THE MEDICAL FACULTY, UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA, AND HOSPITAL ASSISTANT ABDUL AZIZ ABDUL MAJID WERE TAKEN HOSTAGE BY THE PRISONERS AT THE PRISON CLINIC AT 9.30AM YESTERDAY. -- MORE
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ASKED ON SECURITY MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT AND WHETHER THE INCIDENT SHOWED A LAX IN SECURITY IN THE PRISON, HE SAID:

+THERE ARE TOO MANY PRISONERS IN PUDU PRISON BECAUSE THE NEW PRISON IS NOT FULLY COMPLETED YET. THIS HAS POSED DIFFICULTIES IN THE TASK OF GUARDING THEM,+ HE SAID.

ASKED WHETHER THERE WOULD BE AN INCREASE IN ALLOCATION FOR THE PRISONS DEPARTMENT WHICH HAS COMPLAINED OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID: +THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF OUR REDUCING ALLOCATIONS AS WE JUST DO NOT HAVE THE FUNDS.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID IF COMPARED WITH DEVELOPING NATIONS, PRISONS IN THE COUNTRY WERE WELL-EQUIPPED.

+COMPARED WITH THE DEVELOPED NATIONS, OUR PRISONS ARE BETTER,+ HE SAID.

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