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B E050 AAE
MAHATHIR-CABINET R R R

BM

KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 26⁸⁷ (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THE PRACTICE IN SOME COUNTRIES WHERE A CABINET MEMBER WHO UNSUCCESSFULLY CHALLENGES HIS PARTY CHIEF IS REQUIRED TO RESIGN SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN MALAYSIA.

+IT SHOULD BE THAT WAY, BUT IT IS NOT SO HERE. WHAT AM I TO DO?+ HE SAID AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE THREE-DAY 38TH UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY HERE THIS EVENING.

THE UMNO PRESIDENT WAS ASKED WHETHER SUCH A PRACTICE SHOULD BE APPLIED HERE IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT A MEMBER OF HIS CABINET HAD CHALLENGED HIM FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR DECLINED TO REPLY WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD RETAIN TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER TENGKU RAZALEIGH HAMZAH IN THE CABINET. TENGKU RAZALEIGH LOST BY 43 VOTES IN HIS BID TO UNSEAT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AS UMNO PRESIDENT.

ON THE QUESTION OF LOYALTY AMONG HIS CABINET MEMBERS, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE HAD EXPLAINED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MINISTERS ACCORDING TO THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

HE SAID HE HAD EXPLAINED THE OATH (FOR MUSLIMS) AND PLEDGE (FOR NON-MUSLIMS) THEY TOOK ON BEING SWORN IN TO THE CABINET, ADDING: +WE ALL TAKE THE OATH, WE (MUST) ADHERE TO THE OATH.+ -- MORE
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TO ANOTHER QUESTION, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE HAD NO PLANS TO ASK THE CABINET TO RESIGN EN BLOC TO GIVE HIM A FREE HAND TO APPOINT NEW MEMBERS.

HE ALSO SAID THE CABINET NEED NOT NECESSARILY INCLUDE NEWLY-ELECTED UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL MEMBERS.

+IF THERE ARE VACANCIES, THEN THIS MAY BE DONE,+ HE SAID WHEN ASKED WHETHER ANY OF THE NEW FACES IN THE SUPREME COUNCIL WOULD FEATURE IN HIS CABINET.

ASKED WHETHER FOREIGN MINISTER DATUK RAIS YAIM'S BACKING FOR THE RAZALEIGH-MUSA ALLIANCE CHALLENGING HIS LEADERSHIP HAD TARNISHED MALAYSIA'S IMAGE OVERSEAS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE OTHER COUNTRIES UNDERSTOOD MALAYSIA'S DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

+OUR TIES WITH OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY THIS,+ HE SAID. -- MORE
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ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE TO REFLECT THE RESULTS OF THE UMNO POLLS, HE SAID HE COULD DO THIS BUT HAD NOT THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

HE ALSO DESCRIBED THE INVOLVEMENT OF SEVERAL CABINET MINISTERS IN THE PARTY CONTESTS AS +NORMAL+. -- BERNAMA
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