

PM: PRIORITY FOR SALARY REVISION

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Government is giving higher priority to salary revision for civil servants than to purchase of military equipment, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

However, the Prime Minister stressed that the Government also considered defence to be important. Dr Mahathir, who was replying to reporters' questions on defence spending at a Press conference here, said: "If there is economic recovery, and it seems there is, the Government will have some money. We have other commitments

that we have to attend to, (revising) salaries is one of them.

"If after all that we still have some money left, and we feel the need for (upgrading) the country's defence is important, we will certainly spend some money on defence. It is our duty."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had always viewed the salaries of civil servants as an important issue.

"We admit that they have the right to a pay increase if we can afford it. And if we can (afford it), we need

to know how much we can give.

"This comes under the administration of the country's finances. We are not spending the Government's money but the people's money," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that civil servants were not the only ones affected by the recession.

"We also had to reduce spending on development to a very low level and the people did not enjoy much benefit as a result," he said.

Asked if the salary revision would be included in the October budget propos-

als, he replied: "I cannot say now. It will be up to the Finance Minister to say."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir had a closed-door dialogue with senior military officials, during which he explained government policies, especially the Look East policy, privatisation and the inculcation of Islamic values.

Dr Mahathir said that he might discuss the purchase of military equipment with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during his next visit to Britain.

"It will depend on how much money we have," he said.