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LOTTERY-MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 4, (BERNAMA) -- THE SOCIAL AND WELFARE SERVICES LOTTERIES BOARD WILL CEASE OPERATIONS IN SIX MONTHS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

HE SAID THIS WOULD MEAN THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MORE SOCIAL WELFARE LOTTERY IN FUTURE BUT +WE WILL NOT DISTURB OTHER LOTTERY SCHEMES ... THEY DO NOT INVOLVE THE GOVERNMENT.+

THE DECISION, WHICH WAS MADE AT THIS MORNING'S CABINET MEETING, WOULD TAKE ABOUT SIX MONTHS TO IMPLEMENT BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO LOOK INTO THE WELFARE OF THOSE EMPLOYED BY THE AGENCY, HE ADDED.

THE FUTURE OF THOSE INVOLVED IN SELLING THE LOTTERY TICKETS WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE LOOKED INTO, HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER BREAKING FAST AT THE DEFENCE MINISTRY'S MOSQUE HERE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID: +THE SIX MONTHS IS NEEDED TO ARRANGE FOR THESE THINGS, SUCH AS TRANSFER AND ALL THAT... YOU CAN'T JUST CLOSE LIKE THAT BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY WORKING PEOPLE INVOLVED ... WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN.+

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ON THE LOSS OF REVENUE FOR THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING THE DECISION, HE SAID: +WE HOPE WE WILL REPLACE IT WITH OTHER SOURCES.+

HE SAID THAT PREVIOUSLY, THE GOVERNMENT DID DEPEND ON REVENUE FROM LOTTERY SALES BUT NOW THE GOVERNMENT'S REVENUE AND FINANCIAL SITUATION HAD IMPROVED.

ON WHETHER THE DECISION WAS A SIGN THAT THE GENERAL ELECTION IS AROUND THE CORNER, HE QUIPPED: +ALL THESE THINGS ARE SIGNS.+

ON WHY THE DECISION WAS MADE AT THIS TIME, HE SAID: +WHENEVER WE MAKE A DECISION, THE QUESTION WILL STILL ARISE. EVEN IF WE HAD MADE THE DECISION 10 YEARS AGO, PEOPLE WOULD HAVE ASKED WHY NOT EARLIER. THERE MUST BE A TIME WHEN WE HAVE TO DECIDE ... WE DECIDE NOW.+

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO HAD DINNER AT THE MOSQUE WITH MORE THAN 1,000 PEOPLE, MOSTLY MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR TOP BRASS INCLUDING CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCES JEN TAN SRI HASHIM MOHAMED ALI AND THE CHIEFS OF ALL THREE SERVICES OF THE ARMED FORCES. -- BERNAMA
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