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NEGARA-WINDING UP (PERWAJA)

INVESTIGATIONS ON PERWAJA MORE THAN HALF COMPLETED

KUALA LUMPUR, April 28 (Bernama) -- Investigations into financial irregularities involving Perwaja Steel have completed by more than half and the government is trying its best to complete the case as soon as possible, said the parliamentary secretary to the finance ministry, Hashim Ismail.

"It is not the government's intention to delay the investigations. This cannot be avoided as the investigations, which covered several countries, are difficult as concrete evidence was needed to bring the culprits to book," he told reporters after winding up the debate on the supplementary supply bill (2002) 2003 which was subsequently approved at the Dewan Negara here today.

Hashim said since the investigations involved foreign countries, it was not easy to carry them out, especially when they involved Switzerland.

During his winding up speech, he said it was obvious that the investigations would entail a long and difficult process.

"The government also does not want the investigations and prosecution's case to appear weak and inadequate when it is brought before the court. In view of that, comprehensive investigations with clear and concrete evidence from all parties were needed to be compiled before the charges are brought before the process of the law."

Hashim said the investigations were continuing and if all evidence had been gathered, then the case would be solved and the culprits would be brought to book.

He said the government's serious stand on the case could be judged from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Switzerland in June last year.

He said Dr Mahathir not only had discussions with Swiss president Kasper Villinger on two-way trade but also asked the Swiss government to help in the investigations, especially in terms of getting access to information with regard to Perwaja's funds.

"The government aims to complete the Perwaja case and has asked the Swiss authorities for co-operation," said Hashim, adding that this proved that Dr Mahathir was giving serious attention to the matter as he wanted the investigations to be thorough. -- BERNAMA

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