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KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 16 (BERNAMA) -- DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMED, SPOKE TODAY OF THE NEED TO PAY FULL ATTENTION TO FERTILITY PLANNING FROM NOW AS A STEP TO ERADICATE BACKWARDNESS AND POVERTY.

FAILURE TO DO THIS WOULD RUIN THE COUNTRY WHICH WAS IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT, HE SAID IN A SPEECH AT THE LAUNCHING A SEMINAR ORGANISED BY THE NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING BOARD HERE.

THE SPEECH WAS READ BY THE MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT, TAN SRI CHONG HON NYAN, WHO REPRESENTED DR. MAHATHIR.

DR. MAHATHIR SAID THERE HAD NOT BEEN ANY PROGRAMME SO FAR DEALING WITH FERTILITY PLANNING.

THIS WAS INSPITE OF SCHEMES IN THE PAST WHERE PROGRAMMES HAD BEEN PREPARED TO IMPROVE THE PEOPLE'S STANDARD OF LIVING.

HE SAID FERTILITY PLANNING WAS THE FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY AND ACTIVE FAMILY IN MODERN MALAYSIAN SOCIETY. -- BERNAMA MORE 1214/ZCM

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MAHATHIR 2 KUALA LUMPUR

DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE FERTILITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL WAS THE FERTILITY OF THE SOCIETY AND NATION.

AS SUCH, THE NATION MUST ADVISE THE INDIVIDUAL ON FERTILITY MATTERS.

HE SAID THAT FERTILITY PLANNING WAS NOT THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT ALL THE PEOPLE.

DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE PROBLEMS ARISING AS A CONSEQUENCE OF BIRTHS NOW WOULD ONLY BE FELT 15 OR 20 YEARS HENCE.

IT WOULD THEN BE TOO LATE TO ACT WHEN THESE CHILDREN HAD ALREADY ENTERED THE LABOUR MARKET.

HE CALLED ON FLAT DWELLERS AND SQUATTERS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE QUESTION OF FERTILITY PLANNING.

THIS WAS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE FERTILITY OF A FAMILY MUST BE PROGRAMMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. --

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MAHATHIR 3 KUALA LUMPUR

HE SAID THE P PROBLEM WHICH HAD ARISEN FROM UNCHECKED FERTILITY DURING THE PAST 20 YEARS WAS THE NEED TO PROVIDE JOBS TO THE YOUTHS WHO WERE FLOODING THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET.

THE COUNTRY HAD TRIED TO PROVIDE VARIOUS TYPES OF JOBS BUT SUCH EFFORTS WERE FAR FROM ITS TARGET ALTHOUGH THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT DROPPED FROM 7.4 PER CENT IN 1970 TO SEVEN PER CENT LAST YEAR.

HE SAID THAT STATISTICS SHOWED THAT THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED REACHED 300,000 IN 1975, EXCLUDING THOSE IN KAMPUNGS.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SPOKE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNIST ELEMENTS TRYING TO CONFUSE THE PEOPLE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON FERTILITY PLANNING.

AS SUCH, IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD THE POLICY TO AVOID BEING MADE USE OF BY SUCH ELEMENTS.

HE HOPED THAT THE SEMINAR WOULD MAKE PROPOSALS WHICH COULD BE CARRIED OUT BY THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. -- BERNAMA MORE 1222/ZCM

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MAHATHIR 4 KUALA LUMPUR

EARLIER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING BOARD, TAN SRI JAMIL RAIS, SAID THE BOARD WAS DOING ITS UTMOST TO REDUCE THE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH TO TWO PER CENT BY 1985.

HE SAID IF THE BOARD FAILED TO MEET THE TARGET, THEN THE PEOPLE HAD ALSO TO SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BOARD'S FAILURE.

WHAT WAS MORE IMPORTANT NOW WAS TO CREATE AWARENESS AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY PLANNING TO CREATE A NEW AND CAPABLE GENERATION. -- BERNAMA 1224/ZCM