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ALOR STAR, FEB. 20 (BERNAMA) — DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD ANNOUNCED TODAY INCOME TAX EXEMPTION FOR ZAKAT PAYMENTS.

THIS WAS AIMED AT REDUCING THE BURDEN ON MUSLIMS WHO, BESIDES HAVING TO PAY INCOME TAX, ALSO HAD TO PAY TITHES, HE SAID AT A GATHERING TO OBSERVE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY AT THE KEDAH ISLAMIC STUDIES COLLEGE AT KEPLU, 28 MILES FROM HERE.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT REALISED THAT MANY MUSLIMS PAYING INCOME TAX ALSO HAD TO PAY TITHES ALTHOUGH SOME OF THEM DID NOT PAY TITHES BECAUSE THEY WERE PAYING INCOME TAX.

AS SUCH, THE GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED THAT THE AMOUNT PAID FOR TITHES BE EXEMPTED FROM INCOME TAX. — BERNAMA MORE 1333/LK

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FOR EXAMPLE, IF A PERSON NOW PAYING \$500 AS INCOME TAX AND \$100 AS TITHES, HE WOULD NOW HAVE TO PAY ONLY \$100 AS TITHES AND \$400 AS INCOME TAX.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR HOPED ALL MUSLIMS WOULD UNDERTAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PAYING TITHES BECAUSE THESE WOULD ENABLE MORE RELIGIOUS PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT.

HE ALSO SAID THERE WAS NO NEED TO HAVE A LAW REGARDING PAYMENT OF TITHES AS THE MATTER COULD BE HANDLED BY THE ISLAMIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT.

NEVETHELESS, A MUSLIM SHOULD NOT HAVE TO PAY MORE THAN WHAT HE WAS REQUIRED TO.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR LATER PRESENTED 174 CHAIRS AND DESKS WORTH \$6,000 TO THE COLLEGE. — BERNAMA 1334/LK