

NO90: (F)
MAHATHIR-CORRUPTION

BY ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN

KUALA LUMPUR, OCT. 26⁸ (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT IS STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A SPECIAL DEPARTMENT TO COMBAT CORRUPTION, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD DISCLOSED HERE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF CHANGING THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION INTO AN ANTI-CORRUPTION DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY AS IT USED TO BE KNOWN.

IN AN SPECIAL INTERVIEW ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 100TH DAY IN OFFICE, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR STRESSED THAT THE CHANGE WAS FELT NECESSARY TO SPEED UP INVESTIGATIONS INTO CORRUPT PRACTICES.

HE SAID UNDER THE PRESENT SET-UP A LOT OF TIME WAS BEING WASTED ON INVESTIGATION, AND DECISIONS WERE OFTEN DELAYED BY BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS.

AS A RESULT, BY THE TIME A CORRUPT PERSON WAS BROUGHT TO COURT, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD LOSE MORE MONEY THAN THE ACTUAL AMOUNT IT WOULD HAVE SAVED IF THE PARTICULAR ACT OF CORRUPTION DID NOT TAKE PLACE. -- BERNAMA MORE 2040/1B

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+SO WE ARE NOT SAVING ANYTHING BUT AT THE SAME TIME WE ARE LOSING SO MANY THINGS. WE ARE LOSING JOBS, WE ARE LOSING SUPPLIES AND ALL THAT MERELY BECAUSE WE ARE TRYING TO AVOID CORRUPTION IN A VERY INEFFECTIVE WAY, + HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE NEW DEPARTMENT TO BE MANNED BY A CORE OF DEDICATED PEOPLE WOULD ENTIRELY FOCUS ITS ATTENTION ON WIPING OUT CORRUPTION.

+MY IDEA IS TO LET PEOPLE MAKE DECISIONS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AT WHATEVER LEVEL BUT WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP OUR EYES ON THESE PEOPLE.+

+ANY SIGN THAT THEY ARE CORRUPT, ANY RUMOUR OR INDICATIONS THAT THEY ARE CORRUPT, WE WILL INVESTIGATE THEM.+

+FIRST WE WILL ESTABLISH HOW MUCH HE IS WORTH AND THEN WE WILL FIND OUT WHETHER HE IS SUDDENLY RICHER THAN HE SHOULD BE. THEN WE WILL TAKE ACTION. THEREFORE, WE CAN NOW MAKE OUR DECISIONS EARLIER,+ HE EXPLAINED. -- BERNAMA MORE 2045/1B

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ACCORDING TO THE PRIME MINISTER AS IT WAS NOW, QUITE A LOT OF NBI'S TIME HAD BEEN TAKEN UP INVESTIGATING MATTERS WHICH WERE NOT RELATED TO CORRUPTION SUCH AS LOOKING INTO PRICES OF GOODS, THE QUALITY OF GOODS AND THE LIKE.

+ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE SOME FRAUDS GOING ON, IT IS NOT THE DUTY OF NBI TO GO INTO SUCH THINGS,+ HE EXPLAINED.

STRESSING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ENOUGH DEDICTED AND HONEST PEOPLE FROM AMONG THE POLITICIANS, CIVIL SERVANTS AND THE POLICE TO MAN THE PROPOSED DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE RECENT DIRECTIVE REQUIRING TOP PUBLIC OFFICIALS TO DECLARE THEIR ASSETS WAS PART OF THE MOVE TO CHECK GRAFT.

+ONCE WE HAVE GOT THEIR FORMS GATHERED AND KEPT, AT ANY TIME AT ALL WE CAN ALWAYS ZERO IN ON A PERSON EITHER ON SUSPICION OR AT RANDOM BASIS,+ HE SAID. -- BERNAMA MORE 2050/1B

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DESCRIBING CORRUPTION IN MALAYSIA AS NOT AS BAD AS IN SOME OTHER COUNTRIES, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY COULD STILL BE IMPROVED.

HE CLASSIFIED CORRUPTION INTO TWO CATAGORIES--UNDER THE TABLE AND ABOVE THE TABLE.

+WHEN THE STAGE REACHES ABOVE THE TABLE WHERE EVERYBODY, RIGHT FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, IS INVOLVED IN CORRUPTION, YOU CANNOT REVERSE THE PROCESS,+ HE SAID.

+AT THAT STAGE MONEY EARNED FROM CORRUPT ACT IS REGARDED JUST LIKE ANY OTHER INCOME--EARNED INCOME, SO, YOU CANNOT REVERSE THE PROCESS,+ HE ADDED. -- BERNAMA 2053/1B