

KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 11 (BERNAMA) - DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY ASSURED MALAYSIANS THAT THE COUNTRY IS NOT FACING ANY ECONOMIC CRISIS AND SAID THAT THERE IS NO REASON FOR THEM TO PANIC.

THE GOVERNMENT WAS JUST BEING REALISTIC WHEN IT REVISED THE COUNTRY'S GROWTH TARGET FOR THIS YEAR IN KEEPING WITH WHAT WAS HAPPENING THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WAS BETTER TO REVISE THE GROWTH TARGET SO THAT IT WOULD BE ACHIEVEABLE RATHER THAN TO BE STARRY-EYED AND THINK EVERYTHING WOULD BE VERY FINE.

THE GROWTH TARGET FOR 1982 WAS FIRST REVISED FROM 7.2 PER CENT TO 6.5 PER CENT AND THEN TO 5 PER CENT.

AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AT HIS OFFICE IN PARLIAMENT HOUSE HERE, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THERE SHOULD NOT BE ANY PANIC AS MALAYSIA HAS FOUR MONTHS' RESERVES IN TERMS OF RETAINED IMPORTS, WHICH IS PLENTY OF MONEY. - BERNAMA MORE 1720/BW

ND71 (F)

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HE SAID THAT WITH THAT AMOUNT OF RESERVES, MALAYSIA WAS DOING VERY WELL, BETTER THAN MANY OTHER COUNTRIES. THE COUNTRY'S POSITION WAS ALSO ENVIED BY A LOT OF OTHER NATIONS, HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT THE COUNTRY'S GROWTH COULD NOT BE SUSTAINED AT PREVIOUS LEVELS WHEN OTHER COUNTRIES WERE HAVING A VERY BAD TIME.

HE SAID THAT WHEN MOST COUNTRIES WERE HAVING LOW OR NEGATIVE GROWTH MALAYSIA ENJOYED A VERY HIGH GROWTH RATE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID MALAYSIANS MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY WAS RELATED TO THE WORLD ECONOMY, BUT DESPITE THE CURRENT RECESSION IT WAS DOING FAR BETTER THAN MOST COUNTRIES.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR AGREED WITH A SUGGESTION THAT THE MALAYSIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN PARTICULAR WAS TOO SOFT AND DID NOT PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AS IT PANICKED EASILY BECAUSE IT WAS SO USED TO EIGHT OR 10 PER CENT GROWTH. - BERNAMA MORE 1729/BW

ND92 (F)

MAHATHIR 3 KUALA LUMPUR 'R'R'R

HAVING THAT KIND OF MENTALITY, HE SAID, EVERYBODY PANICS EASILY WHEN THERE IS A ONE OR TWO PER CENT DROP IN GROWTH TARGET THINKING THAT IT IS A BIG DISASTER OR CATASTROPHE FOR THEM.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE NOTICED THAT EVEN THE NEWSPAPERS HAD BEGUN TO PANIC OVER THE MATTER.

HE TOLD THE NEWSPAPERS THAT WHILE IT WAS NECESSARY TO REMIND THE PEOPLE TO BE REALISTIC THEY SHOULD NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE ABOUT TO COLLAPSE. WE ARE FAR FROM COLLAPSING.

ASKED WHO STARTED THE PANIC AND WHETHER IT COULD HAVE BEEN BY THE LEADERS CALLING FOR AN AUSTERITY DRIVE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT COULD NOT BE SO.

THIS WAS BECAUSE THE MESSAGE FOR THE NEED FOR AUSTERITY WAS DRIVEN HOME AS EARLY AS LAST YEAR BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, IT COINCIDED WITH THE PRESENT WORLD TREND, HE SAID.

PEOPLE ARE THINKING THAT WE ARE CUTTING \$1,000 FROM MY PAY IN ORDER TO SAVE THE COUNTRY. IT IS NOT GOING TO SAVE THE COUNTRY. IT IS THAT I FEEL THAT MINISTERS ARE HIGHLY PAID. (LAUGHTER).

BERNAMA 1734/BW