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KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 29 (BERNAMA) -- (DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TONIGHT CALLED ON THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO MAKE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO DEVELOP BUSINESS ETHICS WHICH ARE HEALTHY, CONSTRUCTIVE AND CONDUCTIVE TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE AND COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IN A MULTI-RACIAL COUNTRY LIKE MALAYSIA, THE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF A PRIVATE SECTOR IN LINE WITH NATIONAL POLICIES COULD STRENGTHEN UNITY AMONG THE PEOPLE.

THIS EFFORT SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A FORM OF INVESTMENT BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, HE ADDED AT THE PRESENTATION OF DONATIONS TO 16 WELFARE BODIES AND THE MALAYSIAN RED CRESCENT SOCIETY HERE.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR IS PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

HE SAID IRRESPONSIBLE ACTION BY ANY QUARTER TO PREJUDICE PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST THE PRIVATE SECTOR COULD UNDERMINE THE EFFORT.

"IN ALL OUR UNDERTAKING, INTERESTS OF THE SOCIETY AND COUNTRY MUST BE GIVEN PRIORITY -- NATIONAL WEALTH WILL BENEFIT THE NATION," HE ADDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, THE WEALTH OF THE PEOPLE WAS THE WEALTH OF THE COUNTRY AND VICE-VERSA, WITH THE GOVERNMENT PLAYING THE ROLE OF MANAGER MANAGING ALL ACTIVITIES RELATED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. -- MORE 2125/II

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT INCREASED PROSPERITY GENERATED BY THE PEOPLE WOULD MEAN INCREASED NATIONAL REVENUE WHICH COULD BE USED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED BY THE PEOPLE.

"WE ARE STILL POOR IN TERMS OF PER CAPITA INCOME, WHICH IN MALAYSIA IS US\$2,000 OR SO PER YEAR COMPARED WITH US\$8,000 IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES," HE SAID.

"BUT PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS ARE DEMANDING INFRASTRUCTURE ON PAR WITH THAT OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES."

IF THIS EXPECTATION WAS TO BE REALIZED, THE COUNTRY WOULD NEED GREATER REVENUE, MEANING THE PEOPLE SHOULD STEP UP PRODUCTIVITY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS SAD TO NOTE THAT SOME PEOPLE STILL MISUNDERSTOOD THE MALAYSIA INCORPORATED CONCEPT WHICH WAS AIMED AT ESTABLISHING RAPPORT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

"I HAVE RECEIVED OFFERS OF DIRECTORSHIP IN COMPANIES SET UP BY THE PUBLIC BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT THE POLICY MEANT THE GOVERNMENT GOING INTO BUSINESS AS A COMPANY TOGETHER WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR." -- MORE 2130/II

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HE EXPLAINED THAT THE CONCEPT WAS USED TO DESCRIBE A COUNTRY WHERE THE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR JOINED HANDS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL ECONOMIC GOALS AS IF THE COUNTRY WAS A COMPANY OF WHICH THE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR WERE PARTNERS.

HE STRESSED THAT SUCH A FORM OF COOPERATION WAS ONLY LOGICAL BECAUSE PRIVATE SECTOR PROFITS WOULD BENEFIT THE GOVERNMENT AND COUNTRY WHILE PRIVATE SECTOR LOSSES WERE ALSO A FINANCIAL LOSS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

HE CAUTIONED AGAINST AN ATTITUDE OF REGARDING GOVERNMENT OFFICIERS AS HIRELINGS TO BE ORDERED ABOUT, SAYING THEIR COOPERATION AND NOT SUBSERVIENCE SHOULD BE SOUGHT BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

"THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES SHOULD IDEALLY BE THAT OF PARTNERS IN A JOINT VENTURE AND NOT THAT OF SERVANT AND MASTER," HE SAID.

HE ALSO COMMENTED ON IRRESPONSIBLE GROUPS SUCH AS BOGUS HOUSING DEVELOPERS.

HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH SMALL IN NUMBER, THESE GROUPS HAD A DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON THE SOCIETY AND MIGHT CAUSE LOSS OF CONSUMER CONFIDENCE TO THE DETRIMENT OF ALL BUSINESS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEM WAS NOT YET SERIOUS, FIRM ACTION MUST BE TAKEN TO NIP IT IN THE BUD.

-- BERNAMA 2135/II