

MAHATHIR - ROYALTY

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KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 15 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAYS MALAYSIANS SHOULD NOT ENVY MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY WHO BECOME RICH THROUGH GENUINE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES SO LONG AS THEY DO NOT USE THEIR SPECIAL POSITION TO GET CERTAIN PRIVILEGES AND ADVANTAGES.

"OUR INHERENT ROYALTY IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY AND THAT WE HAVE TO ACCEPT."

"THE ONLY THING THAT WE CANNOT ACCEPT OF COURSE IS THE USE OF ANY SPECIALISED POSITION BY ANYONE, WHETHER ROYALTY OR NOT, IN ORDER TO GET CERTAIN PRIVILEGES AND ADVANTAGES," HE ADDS IN REPLY TO A QUESTION ON THE MATTER RAISED DURING A SPECIAL INTERVIEW ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SECOND YEAR IN OFFICE HERE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID NO ONE SHOULD REGRET IF SOMEONE ELSE WERE TO GET RICH BY DOING BUSINESS THE NORMAL WAY.

"IF THEY DO BUSINESS AND THEY TAKE ALL THE RISKS; THEY LOSE MONEY AND THEN THEY MAKE MONEY, THAT IS THEIR ENTITLEMENT," HE SAID.

EARLIER, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR POINTED OUT THAT THE PRESENT SO-CALLED MIDDLE CLASS MALAYS WERE IN FACT THE LOWER CLASS MALAYS AT ONE TIME AS QUITE A NUMBER OF THEM STARTED OFF BY BEING VERY POOR. -- MORE 0816/MB

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HE SAID: "ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MALAY BUSINESSMEN THAT I KNOW IS THE SON OF THE DRIVER OF A BRITISH TIN MINER WHO USED TO LIVE IN THE GARAGE OF THE TUAN'S HOUSE."

"HOW CAN YOU CALL HIM UPPER CLASS? IF HE IS GOING TO BENEFIT FROM THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY WHY SHOULD WE REGRET IT? AFTER ALL, DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY THE MALAYS REACHING ONLY THE UPPER CLASS OR MIDDLE CLASS AND NEVER HIGHER THAN THAT?" HE ASKED WHEN QUERIED ON THE EMERGENCE OF THE MALAY MIDDLE CLASS UNDER THE NEP AND THE REPORTED "RUMBLINGS" AMONG SOME SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY OVER THIS.

THE PRIME MINISTER EXPLAINED: "THE NEP IS NOT JUST BUSINESS. EDUCATION IS PART OF THE POLICY. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE POOR PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN ENHANCED BY THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY."

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE TALK ABOUT CLASS WAS TOTALLY IRRELEVANT IN THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT AS MALAYSIANS WERE NOT CLASS-CONSCIOUS.

"WE ARE THE FIRST PEOPLE WHO WANT TO FLASH AROUND IN OUR CARS. EVEN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES WHO MIGHT HAVE SOCIALISTIC IDEAS DURING THEIR STUDENT DAYS ARE NOWADAYS DRIVING IN NICE CARS. SO WHY SHOULD WE REGRET IT." -- MORE 0819/MB

ZCZC NO10 (F/S)

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"I THINK THIS IS WHAT WE ARE WORKING FOR. I FEEL NO SENSE OF JEALOUSY IF THESE PEOPLE BECOME RICH BECAUSE I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT WHEN THEY BECOME RICH, THEY HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE 40 PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME FOR THE POOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT YET COME UP."

"WE HAVE NO GROUNDS TO BE JEALOUS. LET THEM BE RICH. IF THE CHINESE CAN BE RICH, THE EUROPEANS CAN BE RICH, THE INDIANS CAN BE RICH, WHY CAN'T THE MALAY?"

"THUS IF I CAN HELP THEM TO BE RICH, I'M GOING TO HELP THEM. NO REGRETS," HE SAID. -- BERNAMA 0822/MB