

MAHATHIR - PRIVATISATION

(EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AT 5 P.M. ON JULY 15)

BY REJAL ARBEE AND ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 15 (BERNAMA) - THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT RUSH INTO ALLOWING THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO RUN SOME OF THE EXISTING AND THE YET-TO-BE-SET UP PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES UNDER ITS PRIVATISATION POLICY, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD HAS ASSURED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID EACH CASE WOULD BE CONSIDERED ON ITS MERITS AND IN TERMS OF ITS PARTICIPATION AS WELL AS THE BENEFITS SUCH A MOVE COULD BRING TO THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT.

+WE ARE NOT SAYING PRIVATISE AND THEN TURN THEM OVER TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR JUST LIKE THAT. THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT GOING TO DO THIS,+ HE DECLARED IN A SPECIAL INTERVIEW IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIS SECOND YEAR IN OFFICE.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO ASSURED THAT WHATEVER THE GOVERNMENT WAS GOING TO DO UNDER THE PROGRAMME IT WOULD TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THE MOVE WOULD NOT BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY.

HE SAID NECESSARY GUIDELINES WOULD BE PROVIDED FOR A PRIVATE COMPANY WISHING TO RUN ANY PUBLIC SERVICE.

+IF WE GIVE THE THIRD CHANNEL TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT THEY CAN TELECAST PORNOGRAPHIC FILMS,+ HE SAID. - MORE

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THE PRIME MINISTER ADMITTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S TIGHT FINANCIAL SITUATION WAS ONE OF THE FACTORS THAT LED TO THE PRIVATISATION IDEA.

AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WERE NOW A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF BUMIPUTERA COMPANIES WHICH WERE CAPABLE OF PARTICIPATING IN SUCH A MOVE.

+THE REASON WHY WE DIDN'T PASS ON TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR BEFORE WAS BECAUSE OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY. THERE WERE THEN NOT MANY BUMIPUTERA AGENCIES OR COMPANIES THAT COULD PARTICIPATE. ANY PRIVATISATION BEFORE WOULD HAVE BEEN NON-BUMIPUTERA ENTIRELY AND THIS WOULD BE RESENTED.

+BUT NOW WE HAVE LARGE BUMIPUTERA COMPANIES, PNB AND ALL THAT WHICH OWN GUTHRIE, SIME DARBY, BARLOW BOUSTEAD, AND EVEN BUMIPUTERA INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NOW ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PRIVATISATION PROGRAMME,+ HE SAID.

ON WHETHER OR NOT THE GOVERNMENT REALISED THAT THE PUBLIC WOULD HAVE, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, TO PAY MORE FOR THE PRIVATELY-RUN PUBLIC SERVICES, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID TAKE THIS INTO CONSIDERATION.

HOWEVER, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER CONSUMERS WOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR SUCH SERVICES.

+EITHER THEY PAY THROUGH IT THEMSELVES OR THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT. IF THE GOVERNMENT PAYS FOR SUCH SERVICES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO LOSE MONEY ALL THE TIME AND IN TURN DEPRIVE OTHERS OF THEIR MONEY (THROUGH TAXATION)+, HE SAID. - BERNAMA DB04/BW