

MAHATHIR-POVERTY

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KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 29 (BERNAMA)—ABSOLUTE POVERTY, AS FOUND IN SOME OF THE MORE UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, DOES NOT EXIST IN MALAYSIA, DATUK SERI MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THERE WERE NO STARVING PEOPLE SEEN SCAVANGING FOR FOOD IN DUSTBINS, OR TAKING SHELTER ALONG FIVE-FOOT WAYS IN MALAYSIA, UNLIKE IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

TACKLING THE COURTH MALAYSIA PLAN MID-TERM REVIEW IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT HERE TODAY, HE SAID POVERTY IN MALAYSIA WAS DEFINED IN STATISTICAL TERMS AND IT WAS ONE OF THE INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT.

FOREIGN EXPERTS HE SAID, VISUALISED POVERTY AS BEING SYNONYMOUS WITH STARVATION AND HUNGER.

FOR MALAYSIA, HE SAID, THE INCOME LEVEL SET AS THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN THE POOR AND THE NON-POOR WAS DETERMINED WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE REDUCTION IN HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON ESSENTIAL NEEDS PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OR AVAILABLE IN SOME LOCALITIES.---MORE 1810/HM
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HE SAID THAT SCHOOLS AND CLINICS WERE EXAMPLES OF SERVICES THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE REDUCTION IN HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE, JUST LIKE SUBSIDIES GIVEN FOR ESSENTIAL ITEMS.

IN ADDITION, THOSE LIVING IN ISOLATED AREAS DID NOT PAY VARIOUS TAXES OR INCUR OTHER EXPENDITURES.

ALTHOUGH THESE FACTORS WERE IMPORTANT IN DETERMINING THE STANDARD OF LIVING, THEY HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID.

HE SAID THAT THE INCIDENCE OF POVERTY IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA INCREASED SLIGHTLY FROM 29.0 PER CENT IN 1980 TO 30.3 PER CENT IN 1983.

THE DECLINE IN PRIMARY COMMODITY PRICES, HE SAID, WAS AMONG THE FACTORS WHICH AFFECTED MALAYSIA'S EFFORTS TO ERADICATE POVERTY.

POINTING OUT THAT STATISTICS IN THE REVIEW SHOULD BE REGARDED JUST AS AN ESTIMATE, HE SAID IT SERVE AS AN INDICATOR OF INCOME AND DID NOT REFLECT THE REAL PURCHASING POWER OF THE PEOPLE.---MORE 1814/HM

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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE PRACTICE OF GIVING DOLES WHICH WAS COMMON IN MANY WESTERN NATIONS MUST BE AVOIDED AS A MEASURE TO ERADICATE POVERTY.

+ THIS PRACTICE HAS WEAKENED THE ECONOMY OF A NUMBER OF WESTERN NATIONS TO THE EXTENT THAT THESE NATIONS CAN NO LONGER COMPETE WITH THE OTHER DEVELOPED OR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

THE INCENTIVE TO WORK WAS REDUCED ONCE INCOME WAS GUARANTEED REGARDLESS OF WHETHER ONE WAS EMPLOYED OR OTHERWISE, + HE SAID.

INFACT, WHAT HAD HAPPENED WAS THAT UNEMPLOYMENT AND IDLING TENDED TO INCREASE DURING PERIODS OF ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN WHEN GOVERNMENT REVENUE SHRUNK.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT IN MALAYSIA, THE UNEMPLOYED WAS A BURDEN TO THE FAMILY. + THEREFORE, NO ONE WILL LIKE TO BE UNEMPLOYED AND BE SUCH A BURDEN, + HE SAID. --MORE

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+ OUR EXTENDED FAMILY SYSTEM, HOWEVER, WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST AND HELP STABILISE THE FABRIC OF THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY SYSTEM IN THE WEST HAS CAUSED THE COLLAPSE OF MORAL VALUES TO THE EXTENT THAT CHILDREN NO LONGER RESPECT THEIR PARENTS, THE YOUNG IGNORE THE ELDERS AND THE SANCTITY OF THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ERODED, + HE SAID.

AS A RESULT OF THIS MORAL DECADENCE, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID, INCURABLE DISEASES HAD AFFLICTED THESE SOCIETIES.

IF MALAYSIA WAS ALLOWED TO BE INFLUENCED BY THE CONCEPT OF WELFARE STATE WHICH HAD NO BOUNDS, THE FAMILY AS A UNIT OF SOCIETY TOGETHER WITH THE MORAL SYSTEM WOULD BE DESTROYED, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR WARNED.

ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAID MALAYSIA'S EFFORTS TO ERADICATE POVERTY WOULD RELY MORE ON IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AND IN CREATING OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD ENABLE THE PEOPLE TO EARN INCOME THROUGH THEIR OWN EFFORT. --MORE 1830/HM
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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE FRUITS OF THESE EFFORTS, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD BE SEEN IN THE FELDA SCHEMES WHERE LANDLESS PEOPLE HAD BECOME SETTLERS.

IN ADDITION, THE PRODUCTION OF RUBBER, PALM OIL, OIL AND OTHERS HAD ALSO INCREASED AND HAD AUGMENTED THE GOVERNMENT'S REVENUE WHICH COULD BE UTILISED IN ASSISTING OTHERS IN NEED.

EMPHASISING THAT THE PROCESS OF DISTRIBUTING WEALTH DID NOT END BY THESE EFFORTS ONLY, HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAD BOUGHT OVER SEVERAL INDUSTRIES OWNED BY FOREIGN INTERESTS. AMONG OTHERS, THE NATIONAL EQUITY CORPORATION (PNB) HAD SUCCESSFULLY TAKEN OVER SOME GIANT CORPORATIONS INVOLVED IN MINING, PLANTATION, FINANCE AND OTHER SECTORS.

THE NATIONAL UNIT TRUST SCHEME (ASN), HE SAID, HAD A 1.4 MILLION SHAREHOLDERS WITH \$985.1 MILLION INVESTMENTS:

HE SAID THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN NATION BUILDING WAS TO PROVIDE A STRONG FOUNDATION WHICH A PROGRESSIVE AND STABLE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE COULD BE BUILT.

IN COGNIZANCE OF THIS, THE GOVERNMENT HAD SPENT ABOUT \$40.4 BILLION IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF THE PLAN, ACCOUNTING FOR 94.4 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL FIVE-YEAR ALLOCATION. -- BERNAMA 1922 BW