

MAHATHIR-PETRONAS

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KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 18 (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS TO PRIVATIZE PETRONAS, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE RATIONALE OF THE PRIVATIZATION CONCEPT WAS TO RELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT, OF SOME OF ITS FINANCIAL BURDEN, HE TOLD REPORTERS, AFTER OPENING A BUSINESS LEADERS' CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HERE.

+PETRONAS IS NOT A FINANCIAL BURDEN TO THE GOVERNMENT, + HE ADDED.

HOWEVER, THE PRIVATE SECTOR COULD TAKE PART IN PETROLEUM DOWNSTREAM ACTIVITIES SUCH AS GAB-BASED OR GAS-RELATED INDUSTRIES, HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER REFUTED ALLEGATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PRIVATIZING ONLY AGENCIES WHICH WERE LOSING OR NOT MAKING MONEY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE MALAYSIA AIRLINES SYSTEM (MAS) WAS DOING HELL AND YET THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO PRIVATIZE IT.--MORE

MAHATHIR PETRONAS 2 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID ALL GOVERNMENT BODIES PRIVATIZING THEIR ACTIVITIES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES TO BE MADE PUBLIC SOON.

EARLIER, IN A DIALOGUE SESSION WITH PARTICIPANTS OF THE TWO-DAY CONFERENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER REJECTED A SUGGESTION FOR FORMATION OF A HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE WITH GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATION TO SUPERVISE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIVATIZATION POLICY AND THE MALAYSIA INCORPORATED CONCEPT.

THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, WAS AGAINST THE IDEA OF SETTING-UP A BODY OR COMMITTEE 'FOR EVERY NEW POLICY' IT ADOPTED.

THE VARIOUS EXISTING MACHINERY WAS SUFFICIENT TO COPE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POLICIES.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO IN THE PROCESS OF DISSOLVING MANY DEFUNCT COMMITTEES AND AGENCIES.

HOWEVER, HE DID NOT NAME THEM:

SOME OF THE AGENCIES, HE SAID, MIGHT ALSO BE AMALGAMATED INTO BIGGER AND VIABLE BODIES.--BERNAMA 1535/HM