

PM DISSATISFIED WITH FARMERS, FISHERMEN LIVING, ETANDARD

BERDANG, AUG. 3 (BERNAMA ES) -- DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY HE IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF FARMERS AND FISHERMEN WHO REMAIN IN THE POVERTY GROUP STILL.

URGING THEM TO CHANGE THEIR WAY OF LIFE TO BE ON PAR WITH OTHERS, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD DRAWN UP VARIOUS STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME POVERTY IN THE NATION.

HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS WOULD NOT BE SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT WILLINGNESS OF FISHERMEN AND FARMERS TO UPGRADE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING, HE SAID.

HE SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO SEE THEM LIVE LIKE THEY DID IN THE PAST AND URGED THEM TO BE PREPARED TO CHANGE THEIR WAY OF LIFE AND RESPOND TO THE NATION'S CHALLENGES WHICH WOULD BECOME MORE FORMIDABLE BY THE YEAR 2000 OR 2900.

+ WE MUST CHANGE OUR WAY OF LIFE. WE CANNOT LIVE LIKE 10, 50 OR 100 YEARS AGO. +

+ IF WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO COMPETE TO IMPROVE OUR LIFE, WE WILL BE LEFT BEHIND AND CONTINUE TO LIVE IN POVERTY, + HE SAID WHEN LAUNCHING NATIONAL FARMERS' AND FISHERMEN'S WEEK AT UNIVERSITI PERTANIAN MALAYSIA HERE,

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CELEBRATIONS, AN INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXPOSITION -- AGASIA '84 -- IS HELD AT THE UPM, PARTICIPATED BY 200 COMPANIES FROM 18 COUNTRIES AS WELL AS 31 GOVERNMENT BODIES.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT ALL THE SEMINARS, SYMPOSIUMS AND RESEARCHES TO IDENTIFY THE CAUSES OF POVERTY WOULD BE UNABLE TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS OF THE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN IF THEY DID NOT HELP THEMSELVES.

+ THERE IS NO POINT IN INVITING EXPERTS TO PRESENT WORKING PAPERS ON POVERTY, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT ON WAYS TO ERADICATE POVERTY, IF THE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN DO NOT WANT TO CHANGE THEIR WAY OF LIFE, + HE ADDED.

HE STRESSED THAT WITHOUT THEIR CO-OPERATION, ALL STRATEGIES TO HELP THEM WOULD FAIL.

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HE SAID IT WAS A FACT THAT POVERTY EXISTED EVERYWHERE -- EVEN RICH COUNTRIES WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISTRIBUTE THEIR WEALTH FAIRLY HAD PROBLEMS OF POVERTY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THIS CLEARLY SHOWED THAT POVERTY ERADICATION DEPENDED ON NOT GOVERNMENT POLICIES OR DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH BUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE FARMERS THEMSELVES.

HE ALSO TOLD OF HOW THE GOVERNMENT OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY, TO CHECK BY THE PLIGHT OF THE SQUATTERS IN ITS CAPITAL, EMBARKED ON A HO SING SCHEME FOR THEM,

HOWEVER, NOT SOON AFTER, THE SCHEME DEVELOPED INTO A SLUM AREA WITH THE HOUSES NOT MAINTAINED BECAUSE THE PEOPLE COULD NOT AFFORD TO DO SO.

THE PROBLEM WAS AGGRAVATED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF RELATIVES FROM NEAR AND FAR TO LIVE WITH THE SQUATTERS.

FINALLY, THE SQUATTERS REVERTED TO THEIR ORIGINAL CONDITIONS AS THEY COULD NOT AFFORD THE EXPENDITURE REQUIRED TO LIVE IN THE SCHEME.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT IN A DEVELOPING NATION, IT WAS A FACT THAT THE LEVEL OF LIVING STANDARD BETWEEN THE RURAL AND URBAN AREAS COULD NOT BE MADE THE SAME.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN COULD BE UPGRADED IF THEY CHANGED THEIR METHODS OF FARMING AND FISHING AND JOINED COOPERATIVES.

HE SAID THAT UNDER THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURE POLICY, SCATTERED KAMPUNGS WOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO SMALL TOWNS THAT WOULD ENABLE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN TO SEEK OTHER WORK IN FACTORIES THAT USED MATERIALS FOUND LOCALLY.

UNDER THE POLICY, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT ALSO HOPED TO REDUCE THE NEED FOR MANPOWER TO WORK THE FARMS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF MACHINERY, FOLLOWING THE INTEGRATION OF THE SMALL FARMS AND PADANG FIELDS INTO ESTATES.

--BERNAMA ES