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IPOH, DEC 24 (BERNAMA) - - DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY EXPRESSED ANGER AT THE +EXTREMIST+ATTITUDE OF CERTAIN QUARTERS IN DELIBERATELY RAISING COMMUNAL ISSUES IN THE COUNTRY AND GAVE WARNING OF GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST THEM.

THE PRIME MINISTER CAUTIONED THESE GROUPS AGAINST THINKING THE GOVERNMENT'S SILENCE AND PASSIVITY ALL THIS WHILE GAVE THEM FREE LICENCE TO DO AS THEY PLEASED, INCLUDING DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS AFRAID TO ACT AGAINST THEM.

+TODAY THE GOVERNMENT MAY NOT WISH TO SHOW ITS CLAWS. WE ARE STILL KEEPING QUIET BUT LET NOT ANYONE MAKE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING OUR PATIENCE IS BOTTOMLESS. THERE IS A LIMIT.

+THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HESITATE TO TAKE FIRM ACTION AGAINST ANYONE WHO HAS EXCEEDED THE LIMITS OF WHAT IS ALLOWABLE, + WE SAID TO THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE BY MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE ATTENDING A LUNCHEON GIVEN BY THE KINTA UMNO DIVISION HERE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WHO IS ALSO UMNO P Re sld E Nt AND BARISAN NASIONAL CHAIRMAN TOLD THESE GROUPS TO MAKE A CHOICE -- WHETHER TO CONTINUE WITH THEIR NEGATIVE ACTIVITIES OR TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDE.

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2013MST 24 12 84

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MAHATHIR-WARN 2 IPOH

ALTHOUGH THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT MENTION THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT ACTION THAT WOULD BE INSTITUTED, HE MADE IT CLEAR IT WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG AND PUNITIVE.

+WE DO NOT WANT TO SEE A RECURRENCE OF THE MAY 13 INCIDENT. IF A DEMONSTRATION IS HELD WITH THE AIM OF AROUSING RACIAL FEELINGS, WE WILL RESPOND WITH ACTION THAT WILL BE REALLY PAINFUL TO THE CULPRITS RESPONSIBLE. +

TO SHOW HE MEANS BUSINESS, HE REPEATED, THE WARNING ABOUT THE ACTION FOUR TIMES IN HIS 45-MINUTE SPEECH AND EXPLAINED HIS STATEMENT WAS MADE AFTER HE HAD GIVEN DEEP THOUGHT TO THE MATTER.

HIS WORDS REFLECTED THE MEASURE OF HIS ANGER OVER THE ACTIONS OF AN OPPOSITION PARTY MAKING POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF THE PAPAN RADIOACTIVE WASTE DUMP ISSUE, WHICH LED TO RESIDENTS THERE DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE PROJECT, AND INITIATING A CAMPAIGN FOR BOYCOTT OF THE MADE-IN-MALAYSIA CAR, PROTON SAGA, AND DEMONSTRATION BY THE KAMPUNG BERCHAM SQUATTERS IN PERAK

THESE QUARTERS HAD ALSO LAUNCHED A FUND TO SAVE BUKIT CHINA TO THWART THE MELAKA STATE GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE HILL LOCATED IN THE HEART OF MELAKA TOWN. --MORE

2013MST 24 12 84

R E770 AAE
MAHATHIR-WARN 3 IPOH

HE REGRETTED PARTICULARLY THE TACTIC OF THESE QUARTERS IN TURNING ANY PROBLEM INTO A COMMUNAL ISSUE ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEM HAD NOT STARTED OUT AS SUCH.

+JUST BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN A LITTLE EASY GOING THE PAST TWO OR THREE YEARS, THEY FEEL THEY CAN ACT AS THEY LIKE. THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN THE MAY 13 INCIDENT. THEY ARE NOT AFRAID OF THE RACIAL RIOT THAT MAY ERUPT IF THEY RESORT TO ACTIONS THAT ARE EXTREME, + HE ADDED.

+DONOT THINK THAT A PERSON WHO APPEARS GENTLE AND IS ALWAYS SMILING IS A NICE PERSON WHO IS PLIABLE. WE MUST REMEMBER HIS BACKGROUND, FOR HIS BACKGROUND MAY BELIE THIS APPEARANCE. +

THIS STATEMENT BY DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MAY BE READ AS A VEILED WARNING AGAINST TAKING HIM LIGHTLY; HE WAS AT ONE TIME EXPELLED FROM UMNO FOR HIS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF THE MALAYS AND WAS LABELLED AN +ULTRA+ BECAUSE OF THIS.

THE PRIME MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT THE MALAYS OF TODAY I-EC BY UMNO WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE MODERATE AND NOT THE EXTREMISTS OF THE PAST.

UNFORTUNATELY, OTHERS WERE PURPOSELY CREATING PROBLEMS AND MAKING +THIS AND THAT+ INTO A ISSUE OF ALLEGED GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION OF THEIR COMMUNITY.--MORE
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MAHATHIR-WARN 4 IPOH

+ANYTHING DONE BY THE GOVERNMENT IS INTERPRETED THROUGH A COMMUNAL VIEWPOINT AND JUST BECAUSE THEY SEE THE GOVERNMENT BEING NICE AND GENTLE, THEY THINK THEY CAN SUCCEED WITH THEIR TACTIC, THE TACTIC OF DEMONSTRATION. +

HE WARNED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ENTERTAIN ANY DEMAND MADE THROUGH FORCE, POINTING OUT THAT FORCE COULD BE COUNTERED BY FORCE.

+I AM SURE THAT IF THEY WANT TO PLAY THE GAME OF RACIALISM, UMNO CAN BE MORE RACIALISTIC THAN THEM. IF THE OBJECTIVE IS TO GET SOMETHING BY DEMONSTRATING, I BELIEVE UMNO CAN MOUNT A BIGGER DEMONSTRATION, + HE ADDED TO APPLAUSE BY THOSE PRESENT AT THE LUNCHEON INCLUDING UMNO AND BARISAN NASIONAL COMPONENT PARTY MEMBERS.

HE REMINDED ALL HOWEVER OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH A CONFRONTATION IN A MULTI-RACIAL COUNTRY, ADDING: +THIS IS SOMETHING WHICH WE MUST HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT. +

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD PERSUADED THE MALAYS AND UMNO MEMBERS AGAINST ACTING ACCORDING TO RACIAL SENTIMENTS FOR THEY WERE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THERE WERE CONSTRAINTS THEY MUST NECESSARILY OBSERVE. --MORE
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MAHATHIR-WARN 5 IPOH

+HOWEVER, IF OTHERS GO TOO FAR, UMNO, I THINK, WILL NOT KEEP QUIET. UMNO WILL ACT. THIS CHOICE IS NOT OURS BUT THAT OF THE PEOPLE. +

HE STRESSED THAT UMNO, AS A RESPONSIBLE PARTY, WOULD NOT NEGLECT ITS DUTIES AND ALTHOUGH IT WAS A MODERATE PARTY, IT HAD CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COUNTRY.

+THIS IS A WARNING. WE WILL TRY TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE WHO OPPOSE US FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTION. WE WILL ALSO SAVE THE MUSLIMS WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN ISLAM AND OTHERS WHO TRY TO PLAY WITH COMMUNAL ISSUES FROM THE DANGERS THEY ARE TRYING TO PERPETRATE. +

DATUK SERIDR MAHATHIR SAID THAT HIS FIRST STEP SINCE BECOMING PRIME MINISTER WAS TO FREE AS MANY DETAINEES AS POSSIBLE AND, DESPITE RESERVATIONS OVER THE MOVE, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO TAKE THE RISK.

HOWEVER, THIS DID NOT MEAN THE GOVERNMENT WAS AFRAID TO PUT BACK INTO DETENTION PEOPLE TRYING TO FOMENT CIVIL UNREST IN THE COUNTRY.

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+I WISH TO ISSUE A WARNING TO THOSE WHO DARE SAY THE GOVERNMENT IS WEAK AND AFRAID. I AM WARNING THAT THE WAY OF DEMONSTRATION, BOYCOTT OF THIS AND THAT, IF CARRIED OUT, WILL BRING RETRIBUTION UPON THE HEAD OF ALL QUARTERS, EVEN THE INNOCENT, FOR ALL WILL FEEL THE DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE ACTIONS, + HE SAID.

HE SAID MALAYSIA TODAY WAS A MODEL FOR OTHER COUNTRIES FROM THE ASPECT OF DEMOCRACY FOR THERE WAS NO COUNTRY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA MORE DEMOCRATIC THAN MALAYSIA, MORE TOLERANT WITH ITS PEOPLE GIVEN FREEDOM TO SPEAK, ACT AND CRITICIZE, PROGRESSIVE AND DEVELOPING AT A RAPID PACE AND FREE FROM ANY RACIAL STRIFE DESPITE ITS MULTI-RACIAL AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

+THE MODERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS HAS ITS LIMITS AND IF ANYONE GOES BEYOND THE LIMITS, WE WILL FORGET ABOUT BEING A MODEL TO THE WORLD ALTHOUGH WE MAY HAVE CHERISHED THIS ROLE, + HE SAID.

+THIS WILL BE BECAUSE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS AND NATIONAL INTERESTS MAKE IT INCUMBENT UPON US TO BE FIRM. +

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