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MAHATHIR-FISHERMEN
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(P)
PEKAN, MARCH 23 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY TOOK TO TASK CERTAIN PEOPLE, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS SMART ALECKS, WHO BLAME THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE POVERTY OF FISHERMEN IN THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE REGRETTED THE ATTITUDE OF THESE PEOPLE WHO, IN WRITING ABOUT THE CONDITIONS OF FISHERMEN, CREATED ANTI-GOVERNMENT FEELINGS BY THEIR ALLEGATIONS OF GOVERNMENT NEGLECT OF FISHERMEN.

DISMISSING THEIR ALLEGATIONS AS BASELESS, HE EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD CREATED VARIOUS AGENCIES, IMPLEMENTED MANY PROGRAMMES AND MADE MASSIVE ALLOCATIONS TO IMPROVE THE LIVELIHOOD OF FISHERMEN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

HOWEVER, DESPITE ALL ITS EFFORTS, FISHERMEN IN THE COUNTRY STILL REMAINED POOR, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID WHEN LAUNCHING THE KUALA PAHANG/NENASI FISHERMEN DEVELOPMENT AREA COMPRISING 19 FISHING VILLAGES NEAR HERE.

ALSO PRESENT WERE PAHANG MENTERI BESAR DATUK HAJI MOHAMAD NAJIB TUN RAZAK AND CHAIRMAN OF THE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (LKIM) DATUK ABU BAKAR RAUTIN IBRAHIM. -- MORE
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THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO IS ON A TWO-DAY VISIT TO PAHANG, SAID THE FISHERMEN HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO CHANGE TO MODERN-STYLE FISHING WHICH WOULD HELP THEM GET BIGGER CATCHES.

THIS, HE SAID, CALLED FOR THE USE OF BIGGER BOATS TO ENABLE THEM TO GO DEEPER OUT TO SEA.

FOR THOSE RELUCTANT TO DISCARD THE TRADITIONAL FISHING METHODS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ADVISED THEM TO SWITCH TO OTHER OCCUPATIONS SUCH AS BECOMING SETTLERS OF FELDA LAND SCHEMES.

HE SAID THE SMART ALECKS BEMOANED THE PLIGHT OF THE FISHERMEN BUT DID NOTHING CONCRETE TO HELP THEM OTHER THAN OFFERING PROPOSALS, LIKE THE PROPOSAL FOR CLOSURE OF LKIM.

HE POINTED OUT THAT CLOSURE OF LKIM WOULD STILL NOT SOLVE THE PLIGHT OF THE FISHERMEN. --MORE

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HE SAID PROGRAMMES TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE FISHING COMMUNITY INCLUDED THOSE BASED ON SUGGESTIONS MADE BY INTELLECTUALS BUT STILL SUCCESS HAD NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ASKED MALAYSIAN FISHERMEN TO FIND OUT WHY THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WERE MORE SUCCESSFUL, AND WHETHER THEY WERE POOR BECAUSE THE COUNTRY'S MARINE RESOURCES WERE INADEQUATE.

+IF THE MARINE RESOURCES ARE INSUFFICIENT, THEN WHY ARE FOREIGN FISHERMEN OPERATING IN MALAYSIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS?+ HE ASKED.

WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS THAT FISHERMEN MUST BE WILLING TO CHANGE THEIR FISHING TECHNIQUES AND USE BIGGER BOATS. THIS WOULD ENABLE THE FISHERMEN, PARTICULARLY IN THE EAST COAST, TO REAP THE HARVESTS OF THE DEEPER SEAS, HE ADDED.

THE PROBLEM OF FISHERMEN IN THE EAST COAST NOT BEING ABLE TO GO DOWN TO THE SEA DURING THE MONSOONS COULD BE OVERCOME IF THEY USED BIGGER BOATS, HE SAID. --MORE

1752MST 23 03 85

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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID FISHERMEN CHANGING THEIR TRADITIONAL METHODS OF FISHING SHOULD FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT.