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MAHATHIR-DIESEL

BM

BANGI, NOV 2 (BERNAMA) -- THE PILOT PLANT PRODUCING DIESEL FROM PALM OIL AT THE PALM OIL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF MALAYSIA (PORIM) HAS BROUGHT ABOUT GREAT IMPLICATIONS TO NATIONAL RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND THE INDUSTRIALISATION PROGRAMME, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID.

THE \$2.9 MILLION PLANT, WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER OFFICIALLY OPENED TODAY, IS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING 3,000 TONNES OF DIESEL FROM PALM OIL ANNUALLY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT THE NATION'S CRUDE PETROLEUM RESERVES WOULD BE USED UP IN 20 YEARS.

+IF AT THAT TIME THE WORLD OIL SUPPLY IS DISRUPTED, MALAYSIA WOULD FACE BIG PROBLEMS. THEREFORE, MALAYSIA MUST BE PREPARED WITH AN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCE AVAILABLE WITHIN THE COUNTRY,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT STUDIES CARRIED OUT SO FAR HAD INDICATED THAT DIESEL FROM PALM OIL HAD THE POTENTIAL TO BE USED ON A COMMERCIAL SCALE. -- MORE

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IMPACT STUDIES ON THE USE OF THE DIESEL IN VEHICLES AND ENGINES WERE FOUND TO BE ENCOURAGING, AND ITS QUALITY WAS SIMILAR TO PETROLEUM DIESEL, HE SAID.

PRELIMINARY TESTS USING DIESEL FROM PALM OIL IN TAXIS AND PORIM VEHICLES COVERING ALL TECHNICAL AND PERFORMANCE ASPECTS INDICATED THAT IT COULD BE USED AS FUEL, HE SAID.

IT WOULD ALSO REDUCE POLLUTION, AS THERE WAS LESS EXHAUST FUMES COMPARED WITH DIESEL FROM PETROLEUM.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID WHAT WAS EVEN MORE ENCOURAGING WAS THAT THE DIESEL ENGINES NEED NOT BE MODIFIED FOR USE OF THE DIESEL FROM PALM OIL.

RESULTS ON THE USE OF THE DIESEL ON SIX TAXIS COVERING 70,000 KM AND ON VEHICLES INCLUDING LORRIES, TRACTORS AND LAND CRUISERS COVERING 95,000 KM WERE ALSO ENCOURAGING, HE ADDED. -- MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT DRIVERS INVOLVED IN THE TESTS CONFIRMED THAT THE ENGINE POWER OF THE VEHICLES WAS GOOD.

HE WAS HAPPY WITH THE RESPONSE BY POPULAR VEHICLE ENGINE MANUFACTURERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXTENSION OF THE ENDURANCE TEST FOR VEHICLES USING DIESEL FROM PALM OIL COVERING 300,000 KM.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT PETROLEUM DIESEL COMPRISED 18 PER CENT OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN THE COUNTRY AND THEREFORE, PALM OIL COULD PLAY ITS RIGHTFUL ROLE ESPECIALLY AT A TIME WHEN IT WAS FETCHING A LOWER PRICE IN THE WORLD MARKET AT PRESENT. -- BERNAMA