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MAHATHIR-LAYWERS

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KUALA LUMPUR, NOV 14 (BERNAMA) -- THE PRIME MINISTER TODAY SAID MALAYSIAN PROFESSIONALS GENERALLY, INCLUDING LAWYERS, HAVE NOT QUITE SUCCEEDED IN MAINTAINING THE HIGH STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM EXPECTED OF THEM THROUGH SELF-REGULATION.

(DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMED), IN OPENING THE 8TH MALAYSIAN LAW CONFERENCE HERE, SAID A PROFESSIONAL MAN WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HIGHLY SKILLED, HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND AN EXCEPTIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE INTERESTS OF HIS CLIENT.

AND THE PREMISE OF SELF-REGULATION MEANT THAT PROFESSIONALS REGULATED THEMSELVES WITH THE OBJECTIVES THAT ALL WAS WELL WITHIN THE PROFESSION AND THAT THE PROFESSION ADVANCED WITH THE PUBLIC INTEREST IN MIND.

HE POINTED OUT THAT WHILE PARLIAMENT HAD DEEMED IT NECESSARY TO LEGISLATE ON A WIDE RANGE OF MATTERS TO PROTECT THE CONSUMER FROM THE TRADESMAN, PROFESSIONALS WERE STILL LEFT TO REGULATE THEMSELVES.

HE REGRETTED THAT INSTEAD +PROFESSIONAL BODIES HAVE HAD MUCH GREATER SUCCESS IN ENSURING A CLOSE-SHOP UNION, A MONOPOLY.+ -- MORE

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+AS SUCH, THE MEMBERS' INTERESTS WERE SUPERIOR TO THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC AND EVEN THE NATION. A SITUATION OF SHORT SUPPLY IS MAINTAINED SO THAT DEMAND WILL ALWAYS EXCEED SUPPLY. ANY MONOPOLY IN SUCH A SITUATION IS ABLE TO DICTATE TERMS,+ HE ADDED.

+SO IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT PROFESSIONAL BODIES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ENSURE THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING FOR THEIR MEMBERS.+

THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THAT PROFESSIONALS MUST BE HONEST, TRUSTWORTHY, OBJECTIVE AND IMPARTIAL AND SHOULD NOT BE EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED WITH THEIR CLIENTS.

HE NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN GENUINE GRIEVANCES FROM CLIENTS OF SHODDY AND POOR SERVICE, UNPROFESSIONAL SOLICITING, COMMERCIALISATION OF LAW, AND LACK OF COMPETENCE.

HE STRESSED THAT SHORTCHANGING A CLIENT WAS A FORM OF DISHONESTY AND A MORAL CRIME AND CONSIDERED EVEN MORE SERIOUS IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW BECAUSE OFTEN THE LIFE AND FUTURE OF THE CLIENTS WERE INVOLVED.
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ADMITTED THAT THERE MIGHT BE CASES WHERE A LAWYER SOMETIMES HAD TO DEAL WITH A DISHONEST CLIENT WHO WANTED THE LAWYER ONLY TO TELL HIM HOW TO GET WHAT HE WANTED, BUT STRESSED NEVERTHELESS THAT LAWYERS SHOULD STILL TRY TO BE HONEST BECAUSE OF THEIR POSITION AND WORK IN SOCIETY.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO ADVISED THEM NOT TO PROJECT THEIR OWN FEELINGS AND BELIEFS ONTO THEIR CLIENTS FOR OTHERWISE THE CLIENTS WOULD BECOME SUBJECTS FOR THE PROPAGATION OR ESTABLISHMENT OF THEIR LAWYERS' OWN BELIEFS.

IN SUCH AN EVENT, THE CLIENT'S INTEREST BECOME SECONDARY AND CHANCES WERE THAT HE WOULD PAY THE PRICE FOR THE FAME OR NOTORIETY OF HIS LAWYER, A DEVELOPMENT THE PRIME MINISTER SAID COULD BE SEEN OF LATE.

ALSO PRESENT AT THE OPENING OF THE THREE-DAY CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY THE MALAYSIAN BAR COUNCIL WERE LORD PRESIDENT TUN HAJI SALLEH ABBAS, CHIEF JUSTICE OF MALAYA TAN SRI ABDUL HAMID OMAR AND CHIEF JUSTICE OF BORNEO TAN SRI LEE HUN HOE. -- BERNAMA
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