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MAHATHIR-COMMODITY

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KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 21 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY REMINDED MALAYSIANS OF THE URGENCY OF SWITCHING TO OTHER FAST REVENUE-GENERATING VENTURES OR LEARN TO LIVE WITHIN THEIR MEANS IN THE FACE OF DECLINING COMMODITY PRICES.

+WHAT IS OUR CHOICE? EITHER WE LEARN TO LIVE WITHIN OUR MEANS OR WE JOIN THE RANKS OF THE BASKET CASES, BEGGING FOR AID SO AS TO LIVE IN THE STYLE WE HAVE GROWN USED TO,+ SAID THE PRIME MINISTER.

+WE MALAYSIANS MUST HAVE PRIDE. WE MUST FACE REALITY. SYSTEMATICALLY AND WITH DETERMINATION WE MUST SET ABOUT THE TASK OF OVERCOMING THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE COLLAPSE OF COMMODITY PRICES,+ HE SAID WHEN OPENING A NATIONAL COMMODITIES SEMINAR HERE.

HE ADDED:+WE HAVE READ THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

+SHOULD WE CONTINUE TO PRODUCE WHAT IS NO LONGER IN DEMAND? HOW MUCH CAN WE ABSORB OURSELVES?+ -- MORE

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+SHOULDN'T WE TURN TO OTHER COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES, MANUFACTURING FOR EXAMPLE? WHAT ARE THE MANUFACTURING AREAS THAT GIVE US THE MOST COMPETITIVE EDGE? INDEED, WHAT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE DO WE HAVE?+.

HE NOTED THAT EVEN A SWITCH WOULD NOT BRING RESULTS IMMEDIATELY.

+WE ARE PROMOTING TOURISM BUT IT WILL TAKE YEARS BEFORE WE REAP THE HARVEST= IF INDEED WE WILL.+

THE SAME, HE SAID, APPLIED TO ANY NEW MANUFACTURING.

EVEN LOW COST HOUSING, PROJECTED TO HELP GROWTH BY TWO PER CENT, WOULD NOT ACHIEVE THAT RESULT IMMEDIATELY.

BUT SOMETHING QUICK WAS NEEDED, SAID THE PRIME MINISTER. IN THIS ASPECT, HE CITED THE HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY WHICH HE SAID HELD PROMISE AS ONE OF THE EXISTING ACTIVITIES THAT COULD BE PROMOTED QUICKLY.-- MORE

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+NOT ONLY IS THERE A DEMAND BUT IT USES A LOT OF MANUAL LABOUR. WITH SO MANY PEOPLE UNEMPLOYED, PRODUCTION AND EXPORT OF HANDICRAFT MIGHT BE THE ANSWER,+ HE SAID.

THERE WERE MANY NEW HAND-CRAFTED PRODUCTS THAT MALAYSIANS HAD NOT TRIED THEIR HAND AT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IF ALL ELSE FAILED, +WE HAVE TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH WHATEVER INCOME WE GET AND SUSTAIN OURSELVES ON THIS INCOME.+

HE CITED THE EXAMPLES OF THE JAPANESE AND GERMANS, CURRENTLY THE WORLD'S ECONOMIC GIANTS, WHO NOT ONLY LOST THE WAR (WORLD WAR II) BUT WERE BANKRUPTED IN THE PROCESS, AND YET TODAY THEY WERE BETTER OFF THAN THEIR VICTORS BECAUSE THEY MADE SACRIFICE.

HE URGED COMMODITY PRODUCERS TO TAKE STEPS TO ALLEVIATE THEIR PROBLEMS.-- MORE

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+IF WE SIT TIGHT AND DO NOTHING, IF WE MERELY BEMOAN OUR FATE, OR IF WE JUST URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO DO SOMETHING WE ARE NOT GOING TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING,+ HE SAID.

+WE HAVE TO THINK OF WHAT WE CAN DO AND NOT WHAT OTHERS CAN DO FOR US.+

ON THE SEMINAR, HE SAID IT SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS AN OCCASION FOR WOOLLY THINKING AND RECRIMINATION.

+WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN SCAPEGOATS OR APPORTIONING BLAME.

+THE PARTICIPANTS MUST COME UP WITH PRACTICAL WAYS AND APPROACHES TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS WE FACE. LATER WE WANT TO PUT THEM INTO EFFECT.+

SOME 400 COMMODITY PRODUCERS AND OFFICIALS ARE ATTENDING THE FOUR-DAY SEMINAR.-- BERNAMA

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